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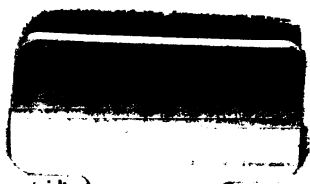
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THE
FAMILY EXPOSITOR

ABRIDGED:

ACCORDING TO THE PLAN OF ITS AUTHOR,

THE

REV. P. DODDRIDGE, D. D.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

1843.

BY S. PALMER.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,

MEMOIRS OF DOCTOR DODDRIDGE.

VOL. I.

These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have Life through his name.

JOHN.

First American Edition.

HARTFORD:
PRINTED BY LINCOLN & GLEASON.

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MEMOIRS

OF THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF

PHILIP DODDRIDGE, D. D.

DR. PHILIP DODDRIDGE was descended from a respectable family in Devonshire. His great-great-uncle was sir John Doddridge, knt. a justice of the King's bench, in the reign of James I. His grandfather, John, rector of Sheperton in Middlesex, was ejected, by the act of uniformity, in 1662*. Mr. Daniel Doddridge, his father, an oilman in London, married the daughter of the Rev. John Bauman, of Prague, who, in consequence of the troubles which followed the expulsion of the Elector Palatine from Bohemia, came to England, and, having brought ample testimonies from many German divines, was appointed master of the Free-school at Kingston-upon-Thames†.

Mr. Daniel Doddridge had twenty children, all of whom died young, except one daughter, and our author, who was the twentieth child, and was born in London, on the 26th of June, 1702. So destitute was he at his birth, of the signs of life, that he was thrown aside as dead. But one of the attendants thinking she perceived some motion in him, cherished with such assiduous care the almost expiring flame of existence, that it was happily preserved. From his infancy young Doddridge had an infirm constitution, and a thin consumptive habit, which rendered both himself and his friends apprehensive that his life would be short. He frequently was accustomed, therefore, especially on the returns of his birth-day, to express his wonder and gratitude that his years were so long continued. His parents brought him up in the early knowledge of religion. His first initiation in the learned languages was in a private school in London. In 1712, he was removed to Kingston-upon-Thames, and placed at the school there under his grandfather Bauman. Here he continued till 1715,

* At that time, he had ten children unprovided for ; notwithstanding which, he quitted a benefice of 200*l.* a year, rather than violate the dictates of his conscience.

† This gentleman likewise gave a great example of integrity. That he might enjoy the free exercise of the Protestant religion, he quitted the possession of a considerable estate, and withdrew, on foot, in the habit of a peasant ; carrying with him nothing but a hundred broad pieces of gold, plaited in a leathern girdle, and a bible of Luther's translation.

and distinguished himself by his piety and diligent application to literature. The same year, he lost his father ; and he had been deprived of his mother some time before. This circumstance, of his being left an orphan, excited in him very serious, but not gloomy reflections ; for he expressed a devout, and even a cheerful trust in the divine protection.

On his father's death, Mr. Doddridge was removed to a private school at St. Alban's. Here he was happy in forming an acquaintance with a gentleman who behaved to him with the kindness of a parent—Mr. (afterward Dr.) Samuel Clark, the dissenting minister of the place. What rendered Mr. Clark's protection particularly seasonable, was a calamity that befel Mr. Doddridge. By the mismanagement of the person into whose hands the care of his affairs had been entrusted after his father's death, he lost the whole of his substance ; and had not Providence raised him up such a generous friend, he could not have proceeded in his studies.

During Mr. Doddridge's residence at St. Alban's, he began to keep a diary of his life ; from which it appears how anxious he was to be advancing in knowledge, piety, virtue, and usefulness. As he had the Christian ministry in view, beside his application to the languages, he read, every morning and evening, portions of scripture, with some commentary upon them ; and it was seldom, indeed, that he permitted either his school-business, or any amusements, to divert him from this course. He recorded the substance of the sermons he heard, with the impressions they made upon him ; noting what was most worthy of imitation in the preacher.

In 1718, Mr. Doddridge left the school at St. Alban's, and retired to his sister's house, at Ongar in Essex. Strong as his inclination was to the ministry, he had little prospect, from the narrowness of his circumstances, of being able to carry his wishes into execution. While he was in this state of suspense, the duchess of Bedford, hearing of his situation and character, made him an offer, that, if he chose to be educated for the church of England, she would support the expenses of his education, and afterward provide for him. This proposal he received with gratitude, but declined it in a respectful manner, as he could not comply with the terms of ministerial conformity. In the distress of his mind, from an apprehension that he should not be able to accomplish what was so near to his heart, he entertained thoughts of studying the law, and was on the point of entering into an advantageous connection with Mr. Eyre, a counsellor, when he received a letter from Mr. Clark, offering to take him under his care, if he chose the ministry upon Christian principles. He considered this offer as a seasonable interposition of Providence ; and, accordingly, he returned to St. Alban's, and continued some months at the house of his excellent friend, who directed his studies, furnished him with books, and laboured to cherish religious dispositions in his heart. In 1719, he was placed under the tuition of the Rev. John Jennings, who kept an academy at Kibworth, in Leicestershire*. In 1722, Mr.

* Author of Two Discourses on preaching Christ, and particular and experimental Preaching ; which were so much esteemed, that they were recommended by two Bishops, at their visitations of their clergy.

Jennings removed to Hinckley, at which place Mr. Doddridge preached his first sermon, on the 22d of July. From his first appearance in the pulpit, he was remarkably acceptable in the places where he exercised his talents. In 1723, he settled at Kibworth. As he lived in an obscure village, he could devote almost his whole time to the acquisition of knowledge. Soon after his settlement at Kibworth, one of his fellow-pupils having condoled with him, in a letter, on his being buried alive, he returned the following answer: 'Here I stick close to those delightful studies which a favourable Providence has made the business of my life. One day passeth away after another, and I only know that it passeth pleasantly with me. As for the world about me, I have very little concern with it. I live almost like a tortoise, shut up in its shell, almost always in the same town, the same house, the same chamber. Yet I live like a prince; not indeed in the pomp of greatness, but the pride of liberty; master of my books, master of my time, and, I hope I may add, master of myself. I can willingly give up the charms of London, the luxury, the company, and the popularity of it, for the secret pleasures of rational employment and self-approbation; retired from applause and reproach, from envy and contempt, and the destructive habits of avarice and ambition. So that, instead of lamenting it as my misfortune, you should congratulate me upon it as my happiness, that I am confined to an obscure village; seeing it gives me so many valuable advantages, to the most important purposes of devotion and philosophy; and I hope I may add usefulness too.'

Dr. Kippis observes, that he has transcribed this passage with peculiar pleasure; as he has reason to reflect with some degree of satisfaction, that the spending of a number of years in retired situations may be favourable to the increase of knowledge and the habits of study. To this gentleman's excellent life of our author, prefixed to the seventh edition of 'The Family Expositor,' we refer the reader for a pleasing account of the particular objects of Mr. Doddridge's studies, and the manner in which he conducted them, both at the academy, and during the earlier years of his ministry. Into these, as well as into his preparations for the pulpit, and the character of his sermons and expositions, during the same period, although very interesting subjects, our limits will not permit us to enter.

In 1725, Mr. Doddridge removed to Market-Harborough, but without discontinuing his relation to the people at Kibworth. About this time, he received pressing invitations from some large congregations at London, Nottingham, and other places. But he preferred his connection at Kibworth and Harborough, and, in 1729, being chosen assistant to Mr. Some, minister of the congregation at Harborough, he preached alternately at this place and at Kibworth. Mr. Jennings, who died in 1723, had declared it to be his opinion, sometime before his death, that Mr. Doddridge was the most likely of any of his pupils to proceed with his plan of academical instruction; and many of our author's friends concurring in the same idea, he opened an academy at Harborough, in Midsummer 1729. His first lecture shewed to his pupils the reasonableness and advantages of acknowledging

God in their studies. In the second, he gave directions for their behaviour to him, to each other, and all around them. After this he proceeded to his ordinary course. Thus was he led to a situation of life which formed the most distinguished scene of his usefulness.*

On the 24th of December 1729, Mr. Doddridge removed his academy to Northampton, in consequence of a pressing invitation to take upon him the pastoral office of the congregation at Castle Hill, in that town. Two months afterward, he was seized with a very dangerous illness, from which, however, he happily recovered; and, on the 19th of March following, he was ordained at Northampton.

Dr. Kippis, speaking of Mr. Doddridge's abilities as a preacher, thus expresses himself: 'He was always warm and affectionate in the applications of his sermons. His sentiments on this head he has thus expressed: "It is indeed unworthy the character of a man and a Christian, to endeavour to transport men's passions, while the understanding is left uninformed, and the reason unconvinced. But, so far as is consistent with a proper regard to this leading power of our nature, I would speak and write of divine truths with a holy fervency. Nor can I imagine that it would bode well to the interest of religion to endeavour to lay all those passions asleep, which surely God implanted in our hearts to serve the religious as well as the civil life, and which, after all, will probably be employed to some very excellent or very pernicious purposes." This is the language of wisdom. True eloquence consists in an union of the rational, the forcible, and the pathetic; and to address to the affections, as well as to the reason, of mankind, is the dictate of the soundest philosophy. The cold and feeble conclusions of many discourses from the pulpit, are as disgusting to a just taste, as they are unprofitable with regard to religious improvement.'

In 1738, Mr. Doddridge persuaded his people to concur with him in establishing a charity school, for instructing and clothing twenty boys. He himself often visited the school, and examined the children; accompanying his exhortations with affectionate prayers for their improvement and welfare. With such distinguished abilities, and such excellent virtues, it is not surprising that he possessed the esteem and love of his congregation. In his last will he bore this testimony to their character, 'That he had spent the most delightful hours of his life in assisting the devotions of as serious, as grateful, and as deserving a people, as perhaps any minister ever had the happiness to serve.'—'This character,' says Dr. Kippis, 'was, no doubt, almost universally true. Nevertheless, he was not without his calls for the exercise of patience. There were persons belonging to his society, who were narrow bigots, and weak enthusiasts; and these sometimes obtruded upon him in a foolish and troublesome manner. He behaved, however, to them, with a condescension and tenderness which they scarcely deserved, and of which few ministers of the gospel would be able to set an equally striking example.'

* The late Rev. Hugh Farmer, so well known among the Dissenters as a most excellent preacher, and by the literary world in general for his extensive learning and valuable publications, was one of Mr. Doddridge's earliest students.

In 1730, Mr. Doddridge married Mrs. Mercy Maris, of Worcester; a lady who, with a delicate constitution, and precarious state of health, proved an excellent wife, and received, in return, the most endearing proofs of conjugal affection.

Dr. Kippis, in his Life of our Author, has employed many pages in an interesting account, interspersed with important reflections, of the manner in which Mr. Doddridge conducted himself as an academical tutor. We must here be content to observe, that so great was his reputation in this respect, that the number of his students was large, being, one year with another, thirty four: and the academy was usually on the increase. During the twenty-two years in which he sustained this office, he had about 200 young men under his care, of whom 120 entered upon the ministry. Several of his pupils were from Scotland and Holland. One person, who was intended for orders in the church of England, chose to spend a year or two under his tuition, before he went to the university. Others, whose parents were of that church, were placed in his family, and were readily allowed to attend the established worship; for the constitution of his academy was perfectly catholic.

Mr. Doddridge, in younger life, afforded various proofs of a poetical turn. Of the lines which he wrote on the motto to the arms of his family, 'Dum vivimus vivamus,' Dr. Johnson's opinion was, that they constituted one of the finest epigrams in the English language. Though so well known, they cannot be omitted in any memoirs of the author's life:

'Live, while you live,' the epicure would say,
'And seize the pleasures of the present day.'
'Live while you live,' the sacred preacher cries,
'And give to God each moment as it flies.'
Lord, in my views let both united be;
I live in pleasure when I live to Thee.

Mr. Doddridge's first distinct publication was printed, without his name, in 1730. It is intitled 'Free Thoughts on the most probable Means of reviving the Dissenting Interest, occasioned by the late Enquiry into the Causes of its Decay.' Mr. Doddridge's pamphlet, in which he materially differed from the author of the Enquiry, is a model of the candour and politeness with which remarks may be made on the writings and opinions of another. In 1732, he published 'Sermons on the Education of Children;' which contain, in a little compass, a variety of affecting motives, to animate parents in the discharge of their momentous duty. In 1735, he published his 'Sermons to young People*.'

* Our limits will not permit us to take notice of the many single sermons published by our author. But Dr. Kippis has given an account of them in their chronological order; a circumstance, to which Mr. Orton, in his very copious Memoirs, had not attended. We must notice, however, that he published a sermon, on a very melancholy and affecting occasion—the loss of his eldest daughter, a hopeful child, nearly five years old. It is intitled, 'Submission to Divine Providence on the Death of Children, recommended.' Few superior instances of pathetic eloquence are to be met with in the English language.

In 1736, the university of Aberdeen conferred on Mr. Doddridge the degree of Doctor in Divinity ; upon which occasion his pupils thought it a proper piece of respect to congratulate him in a body. He was gratified by their compliment, but told them, that ' their learning, piety, and zeal, would be more to his honour, and give him a thousand times more pleasure, than his degree, or any other token of public esteem.' In the same year, he published ' Ten Sermons on the Power and Grace of Christ, and the Evidences of his glorious Gospel.' The three last, on the ' Evidences of the Gospel,' were afterward separately printed, at the particular request of one of the first dignitaries of the church of England. They contain a very judicious summary of several of the principal arguments in support of the Christian revelation, and especially of those which prove the genuineness and credibility of the evangelical history. The author had the satisfaction of knowing that these discourses were the means of converting to the belief of our holy religion two gentlemen of distinguished abilities, who had been sceptical upon this head. One of them who had endeavoured to prejudice others against the evidences and contents of the gospel, became a zealous preacher of Christianity, as well as a shining ornament to it in his life and manners.

In 1739, our author published the first volume of ' The Family Expositor ; or, a Paraphrase and Version of the New Testament : with critical Notes, and a practical Improvement of each Section.' This volume contained the former part of the History of our Lord Jesus Christ, as recorded in the four Evangelists, disposed in the order of an harmony. The second volume was published in 1740, concluding the evangelical history. Soon after, he published, ' The Scripture Doctrine of Salvation by Grace through Faith, illustrated and improved in two Sermons.' This was followed by ' Practical Discourses on Regeneration,' which had been delivered on Sunday evenings, and attended with remarkable diligence, by many persons of different persuasions, to some of whom they were eminently useful. The character given of them by a foreign divine, on their being translated into Dutch, was, that they united orthodoxy with moderation, zeal with meekness, and deep, hidden wisdom with uncommon clearness ; that simplicity shone in them without coldness, elegance without painting, and sublimity without bombast.

In 1743, Dr. Doddridge published an answer to the pamphlet, entitled ' Christianity not founded on Argument,' which, under the appearance of a zeal for orthodoxy, contained, in reality, an attack upon our holy religion. This answer was comprised in three letters, written with the utmost politeness and candour, and for which he was thanked by some men of distinguished rank and abilities. The last letter, in particular, is thought to contain the best illustration, and most rational and full defence of the influences of the Spirit upon the human heart, which had hitherto been published.

In the same year, our author published, ' The Principles of the Christian Religion, expressed in plain and easy Verse, for the Use of Children and Youth.' In this performance, ease, plainness, and ele-

gance are happily united ; but it might have been more extensively useful, if no doctrine of a disputable nature had been introduced*.

Dr. Doddridge was active in the scheme for erecting a county infirmary at Northampton. He published, in 1743, a Sermon in favour of that benevolent design ; and the success of it was greatly owing to his exertions.

In the same year, Dr. Doddridge became a member of a Philosophical Society at Northampton. In the course of their meetings in 1744, he exhibited a paper on the doctrine of pendulums, and another on the laws of the communication of motion, as well in elastic as in non-elastic bodies. The most material propositions relating to both were set in a very plain light in these papers. He likewise wrote and communicated to the Royal Society three papers, which evince the extraordinary activity of his mind.

In 1745, he published 'The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul,' illustrated in a course of serious addresses, suited to persons of every character and circumstance, with a devout meditation or prayer added to each chapter. This was one of the most popular and useful of his practical works. It met with the warmest applause, not only from the Dissenters, but from several persons of rank, learning, and piety, both clergy and laity, in the established church. A person of distinguished literature and goodness always carried the work with him ; declaring that it was every thing on the subject of serious and practical devotion†

In 1747, Dr. Doddridge published 'Some remarkable Passages in the Life of the Hon. Col. James Gardiner.' His design was not merely to perform a tribute of gratitude to the memory of an invaluable friend, but of duty to God and his fellow-creatures ; as he had a cheerful hope that the narrative would, under the divine blessing, be the means of spreading a warm and lively sense of religion.‡

* There is some reason to believe, that they were made use of in the education of the royal children. See *Letters to and from the Rev. Philip Doddridge, D. D.* p. 89.

† There are some strictures on this performance, that deserve attention, in a Letter to the Doctor, written by one of his best friends, and inserted in Dr. Kippis' Life, page 91—95.

‡ Among the Doctor's literary correspondents, who thought highly of this performance, was the learned Warburton, who expressed the most unqualified approbation of the whole work. 'I had the favour,' says this eminent writer, 'of your letter, and along with it colonel Gardiner's Life, which I have just read through with very great pleasure. Nothing can be better or more judicious than the writing part. Many considerations made the subject of great importance and expediency. The celebration of worthy men, who sacrificed themselves for the service of their county ; the tribute paid to private friendship ; the example, particularly to the soldiery, of so much virtue and piety, as well as courage and patriotism ; the service done to the survivors of their families, are such important considerations as equally concern the writer and the public. I had a thousand things to remark in it which gave me pleasure. But I have room but for two or three. The distinction you settle between piety and enthusiasm in the 78th page, is highly just and important, and, very necessary for these times, when men are apt to fall into the opposite extremes. Nor am I less pleased with your observations on the mutilated form of Christianity, in the 130th page : we see the terrible effects of it. The same plea-

In 1748, appeared the third volume of the 'Family Expositor, containing the Acts of the Apostles, with additional Notes on the Harmony of the Evangelists;' and 'Two Dissertations, 1. On sir Isaac Newton's System of the Harmony. 2. On the New Testament.' This volume is a very valuable part of Dr. Doddridge's great work. In the dissertation on sir Isaac Newton's scheme for reducing the several histories contained in the Evangelists to their proper order, Dr. Doddridge successfully combats sir Isaac's hypothesis. But, at the same time, he pays him a very fine compliment. 'I cannot,' says the doctor, 'set myself to this task, without feeling the fatigue of it sensibly allayed, by the pleasure with which I reflect on the firm persuasion which a person of his unequalled sagacity must have entertained of the truth of Christianity, in order to his being engaged to take such pains in illustrating the sacred oracles: a

sure your 162d and 163d pages afforded me. Your hymns are truly pious and poetical. The note at the bottom of page 176 is fine. I entirely agree with your sentiments concerning the extraordinary circumstance of the good man's conversion. On the whole the book will do you honour; or, what you like better, will be a blessing to you by its becoming an instrument of public good.'

The chief observation that Mr. Orton makes on the work is, that 'the author had the pleasure to hear of some instances in which it had answered his desires and hopes; though many thought, and perhaps justly, that he too much indulged the emotions of private friendship and affection in the composition.' 'In the truth of this remark,' says Dr. Kippis, 'I entirely concur. Colonel Gardiner was indeed a man of a most excellent character; but that character was tinctured with enthusiasm and religious bigotry. His virtues were of the awful kind. I remember well that his aspect was the aspect of dignity; but this dignity was mixed with an austerity of appearance and manner, which was not prepossessing to the minds of the students belonging to the academy at Northampton. The affection of his eldest son to his father, had, I know, more of fear united with it than is usually desirable in a child toward a parent. Dr. Doddridge undoubtedly went too far, when, in his funeral sermon for colonel Gardiner, he deliberately declared, that it was hard for him to say where, but in the book of God the colonel *found his example*, or where he had *left his equal*. The doctor was himself a superior character. Let it, however, be remembered, that if our author was somewhat extravagant in the praises of his friend, he said nothing, of the truth of which he was not fully persuaded.

'It is not my design,' continues Dr. Kippis, 'to enter specifically into the story of colonel Gardiner's extraordinary conversion. That the impression made upon his mind was in a dream, is sufficiently intimated to be the opinion of Dr. Doddridge, though the colonel himself believed it to be a miraculous vision. As a dream it may very rationally be accounted for, from the predisposing circumstances. He had received a strictly pious education; he had never rejected the principles, though he had departed from the practice of Christianity; he often felt the anguish of his course of life; he was alone, in the solemn stillness of the night; a religious book happened to be opened by him; the dreadful crime in which he was going to engage flashed upon his conscience. Falling asleep in this agitation of his spirits, a dream followed, accommodated to his waking reflections. Nor was he, on this account, the less indebted to the goodness of Divine Providence for the happy and effectual change that was produced in his disposition and conduct. The events which are derived through a succession of intermediate causes, are not less the result of the administration of the Supreme Being than more immediate interpositions. There cannot be a surer dictate of reason, than it is of scripture, that every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights.'

pleasure, which I doubt not every good reader will share with me ; especially as (according to the best information, whether public or private, I could ever get) his firm faith in the divine revelation discovered itself in the most genuine fruits of substantial virtue and piety ; and consequently gives us the justest reason to conclude, that he is now rejoicing in the happy effects of it infinitely more than in all the applause which his philosophical works have procured him ; though they have commanded a fame lasting as the world, the true theory of which he had discovered, and (in spite of all the vain efforts of ignorance, pride, and their offspring bigotry) have arrayed him as it were in the beams of the sun, and inscribed his name among the constellations of heaven.'

In 1749, Dr. Doddridge published 'A plain and serious Address to a Master of a Family on the important Subject of Family Religion.' This was accompanied with two prayers ; one to be used as an introduction to a stated course of family-prayer, where it had formerly been neglected ; and the other a prayer for a family, to be used either morning or evening. The doctor, though a dissenter, and excelling in the copiousness of extemporaneous adorations, was not, we see, averse to forms of prayer on proper occasions.

On the 16th of December 1750, Dr. Doddridge performed the last tribute to the memory of his excellent friend and father, Dr. Clark, who died on the 4th of that month, by preaching his funeral sermon at St. Alban's. The journey which he took for this purpose laid the foundation of his own death ; for he contracted a cold, that hung upon him the remainder of the winter. When the spring advanced, the disorder considerably abated ; but in the summer it returned with violence. In this state of his health, he was advised to lay aside his public work for a time, and to apply himself to the use of proper medicines and exercise. With the former part of this advice he could not be prevailed upon to comply ; for, in his estimation, to be useless was worse than death. While he apprehended that there was no immediate danger, he could not be induced to lessen the sacred employments in which he so much delighted. The nearer he approached to his dissolution, the more plainly was observed his continual improvement in a heavenly temper. He seemed to have gotten above the world, and to be daily breathing after immortality. This disposition of his mind was ardently expressed in several of his letters, and is manifest from his will, which was made at this time, and is prefaced in the following language : 'Whereas it is customary on these occasions to begin with commending the soul into the hands of God through Christ, I do it ; not in mere form, but with sincerity and joy ; esteeming it my greatest happiness, that I am taught and encouraged to do it, by that glorious gospel, which, having most assuredly believed, I have spent my life in preaching to others ; and which I esteem an infinitely greater treasure than all my little worldly store, or possessions ten thousand times greater than mine.'

The last time that Dr. Doddridge administered the Lord's Supper to his congregation at Northampton, was on the 2d of June, 1751. In the previous sermon, which was from Hebrews xii. 23, he dropped some hints of his approaching decease, and spoke with great tender-

ness and affection to his people on the prospect of their final separation. In July, he preached to his congregation, what proved to be his farewell sermon, from Rom xiv. 8 ; and the last public service in which he was engaged, was on the 18th of the same month; at the ordination of the Rev. Mr. Adams, at Bewdly. After this he resided, some weeks, at the house of his friend, the Rev. Mr. Orton, at Shrewsbury. In August, he went to the Hot wells, at Bristol ; but his health still declining, he was advised, as the last resort, to repair to Lisbon. As the doctor was not in affluent circumstances, the great expense of this voyage became a very serious objection to it. But this was obviated by a very liberal subscription among his friends, set on foot by a worthy clergyman to whom the doctor had undesignedly dropped a hint of his situation. He left Bristol on the 17th of September, and embarked on board the packet at Falmouth on the 30th. Upon the sailing of the vessel, the new scene which opened upon him, and the soft air and fresh breezes of the sea, had the most pleasing effect on his spirits. He generally sat the greatest part of the day, in an easy chair, in the captain's cabin ; and his mind was admirably sustained by delightful views of the heavenly world. Such sacred gratitude and joy appeared in his countenance, as often brought to the remembrance of Mrs. Doddridge, the following lines in one of his hymns :

When Death o'er Nature shall prevail,
And all the powers of language fail,
Joy through my swimming eyes shall break,
And *mean* the thanks I cannot speak.

In the bay of Biscay the vessel was becalmed for some days ; and the weather proved so intensely hot, that Dr. Doddridge's colligative sweats returned, attended with a faintness that threatened his speedy dissolution. But when the ship came to the desired haven, and was waiting for the usual ceremonies of entrance, the fineness of the day, the softness of the air, and the delightful prospects by which he was surrounded, gave him a fresh flow of strength and spirits. He derived from it such a sensible degree of refreshment, as to raise even a flattering hope of his recovery. On the 13th of October, he landed. The next day he wrote to his assistant at Northampton, giving him a short account of his voyage. After mentioning his great weakness and danger, he added, ' Nevertheless, I bless God, the most undisturbed serenity continues in my mind, and my strength holds proportion to my day. I still hope and trust in God, and joyfully acquiesce in all he may do with me. When you see my dear friends of the congregation, inform them of my circumstances, and assure them, that I cheerfully submit myself to God. If I desire life may be restored, it is chiefly that it may be employed in serving Christ among them ; and that I am enabled by faith to look upon death as an enemy that shall be destroyed ; and can cheerfully leave my dear Mrs. Doddridge a widow in a strange land, if such be the appointment of our heavenly father. I hope I have done my duty, and the Lord do as seemeth good in his sight.'

At Lisbon, Dr. Doddridge was treated with all the kindness and respect that the most amiable and exalted character could claim. But the change of climate produced no favourable effect. On the 24th of

October, he was seized with a colliquative diarrhoea, which soon exhausted his little strength. Nevertheless, during the succeeding night, he preserved the same calmness, vigour, and joy of mind, which he had felt and expressed through the whole of his illness. The only pain he had in the thought of dying, was the fear of that grief and distress which Mrs. Doddridge would suffer from his removal. To his children, his congregation, and his friends, he desired to be remembered in the most affectionate manner. Many devout sentiments and aspirations were uttered by him; but Mrs. Doddridge's heart was too much affected with his approaching change, to be able to recollect them distinctly. On the following day he lay in a gentle doze, in which he continued till an hour before his death. At the last struggle he appeared restless, and fetched several deep sighs, soon after which he obtained his release, on the 26th of October, old style, about three in the morning.

Dr. Doddridge had frequently expressed a wish to be interred in the meeting-house at Northampton, where his children, and so many of his congregation and friends were deposited. During his illness, however, he spoke of this as a matter quite indifferent to him; and, to avoid increasing the distress of his afflicted wife, he was desirous of being buried wherever he should die. It was found, upon inquiry, that the removal of the body to England would be attended with a great expense; and it was, therefore, judged most prudent to decline it. Accordingly, his remains were conveyed to the burying-ground belonging to the British factory, at Lisbon, with as much decency and respect as circumstances and the place would admit, the greater part of the gentlemen of the factory attending his funeral.

Though Dr. Doddridge's congregation had not the melancholy satisfaction of having him interred at his own meeting-house, they erected in it a handsome monument to his memory, and made a generous present to his widow after her return. The inscription, which was drawn up by the doctor's ingenious friend, Gilbert West, esq. (author of an excellent treatise on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ) was as follows:

To the memory of
 PHILIP DODDRIDGE, D. D.
 Twenty-one years Pastor of this Church,
 Director of a flourishing Academy,
 And Author of many excellent Writings;
 By which
 His pious, benevolent, and indefatigable zeal
 To make men wise, good, and happy,
 Will far better be made known,
 And perpetuated much longer,
 Than by this obscure and perishable marble;
 The humble monument, not of his praise,
 But of their esteem, affection, and regret,
 Who knew him, loved him, and lament him;
 And who are desirous of recording,
 In this Inscription,
 Their friendly but faithful testimony

PREFACE.

WHEN the excellent Dr. DODDRIDGE had published the greater part of *The Family Expositor*, he informed his friend Mr. JOB ORTON, by letter, that it was his intention, if his life should be spared, to print a cheaper edition, without the Paraphrase, the Prefaces, or the learned notes, for the sake of extending its usefulness in the families of plain Christians. This Letter Mr. ORTON communicated to me many years ago, with a request that I would undertake the execution of such an edition. At that time I declined it, for reasons which need not now be mentioned. When that worthy man afterwards honoured me with the care of his own MSS. on the *Old Testament* (which after his decease, for want of time, I put into the hands of the late Mr. Gentleman) he renewed his wish that an abridged edition of Dr. Doddridge's *Exposition of the New Testament* might be printed, in an uniform manner with it. Mr. Gentleman accordingly, after finishing the former, published proposals for the latter. But his untimely death prevented the execution of his design: Hereupon I received renewed applications to undertake the work. From a conviction of the utility of such a performance, and the peculiar excellence of Dr. DODDRIDGE's *Practical Reflections*, I cheerfully complied; and my principal objection was easily removed by the liberal proposal of a friend, who offered to be responsible for the expense.

It is proper now to inform the reader of the manner in which the work is executed. And in the first place he may be assured that it is entirely Dr. DODDRIDGE's; excepting a few such small variations and corrections as were in a manner necessary, or as every judicious reader, it is presumed, will admit to be highly expedient.

The principal of these are in the *Harmony of the Evangelists*, contained in this first volume. The object of the author was, so to transpose and compound the histories of all the four Evangelists, as to form

one regular narrative. The design was important, and the execution of it discovers great ingenuity in the author, and must have cost him immense labour. But the attempt to include *every* clause of each writer (which indeed he found impracticable) was attended with considerable inconveniences. It occasioned much redundancy and uncouthness of language ; and where there was any variation, especially any apparent inconsistency, in the different writers, it necessarily rendered the narrative so awkward, even with the advantage of the Doctor's own translation, as to require all his ingenuity in paraphrasing, to render some paragraphs tolerable. It may therefore easily be supposed, that such passages thus compounded, when they come to appear in the naked translation (though evidently accommodated to this Harmony) must read unpleasantly, to say the least. Of this the author was evidently sensible ; so much so that it is surprising he did not alter his plan ; which he doubtless would have done had he lived to publish the abridgment himself.

For any other editor to make such alterations as every competent judge will allow to be expedient, and in some cases necessary, must be thought a matter of delicacy, and of no small difficulty*. In what I have done, I have proceeded with the utmost caution ; but that caution against using too much liberty occasioned the more trouble : much more indeed than readers in general will imagine, or than I had apprehended before I had pledged myself for the undertaking. It was found necessary to transcribe the whole ; in doing which the following method was taken. Where words from one Evangelist were introduced into the narrative of another, which appeared totally redundant and of no importance to be noticed (which are chiefly particles) they are wholly omitted, with this mark *o* in their place. Where they appeared of any moment to be known, they are put at the bottom of the page..

Where the same general facts are recorded by different evangelists with some variety, or apparent inconsistency of circumstances, the fullest and clearest account is retained in the text, and the variations as to language and circumstances, are inserted in the notes.

The same method has likewise been used with regard to the discourses and occasional speeches of our Lord, his disciples, and other persons, which the sacred historians report variously. The author has retained, where he could, all the words which they all introduce, and transposed them in the best order he was able ; as if he had supposed that these writers on all occasions record the identical words which were spoken, and that each relates a part, which, all together, make up the whole ; in consequence of which method of harmonizing, more words sometimes appear to have been used than it is reasonable to think were actually spoken, and in some instances it makes a disa-

* For this reason Mr. *Gentleman* proposed entirely to drop the *Harmony* and to adopt the common translation. But then the work would not have been Dr. *Doddridge's*.

agreeable tautology. See for instance, our Lord's words in *rebuking the unbelief of the disciples in the storm*; and those of Peter in *denying his master, and of the other speakers on that occasion*. In these and the like cases, I have retained the chief expressions from one Evangelist, and placed the parallel passages from others in the margin below. A few other needful alterations in the *Harmony*, will be found noticed, and the reasons explained, in the places where they occur.

The *Paraphrase*, agreeably to the author's intention, is entirely omitted where it appeared to be unnecessary; but where the sense of a passage seemed to want illustration it is retained, though as much as possible abridged: frequently the insertion of a word or two was found sufficient, and in a few instances the explanation is taken from the Notes. All these are distinguished from the text by *Italic letters*. Where any additional explanation seemed to be wanting, which is but seldom, the editor has inserted a few words; which are included in [*brackets*]*.

The author's *new Version* (which contains many great improvements on the common one) is here retained throughout, with the exception of a few instances of little moment, chiefly in the particles, where he had departed from the public translation without any other apparent reason than to accommodate it to his paraphrase, or where he had unaccountably substituted a difficult word for an easy one (such as *præscience* for *fore-knowledge*) in which cases the common rendering is sometimes restored, and is expressed by this mark *r*. But the author's sense of a passage is in no case altered. In some difficult texts however, of which his rendering did not appear quite satisfactory, later translations have been consulted, and when any of them seemed to throw any new light upon a passage, they have been referred to in the Notes, but never with relation to any *doctrinal sentiment*. These notes, which are very few and very short, are distinguished by the initial letter of the author's name, v. g. C. denotes *Campbell*, M. *Macknight* (*on the Epistles*), W. *Wakefield*. A. The Anonymous editor of *Dr. Doddridge's Translations with brief Notes*. 2 vols. 12 mo. 1765.—C. T. the common translation.—Where D. occurs in the notes, it signifies the author, and E.D. the Editor, who has in a few places ventured a remark of his own.

All the other Notes which have no mark of distinction, are taken from the original work, but considerably abridged. Learned and critical ones are purposely omitted, according to the intention of the author. What are retained are adapted to common readers, and they include most of those that are of any great importance to illustrate the sense of the sacred writers.

* The reader is desired to observe, that in a few of the first pages, there are some words in brackets, which are printed in the same letter with the rest, as there are through the whole of the original work. These are *supplementary* words, which properly belong to the *translation*. But it was afterwards thought needless to distinguish these from the other explanatory words, and therefore these marks, which rather disfigure the page, were discontinued.

The author's admirable *Improvements** of each section (though some of them might have been with great advantage abridged) are all printed *verbatim* from the copy, excepting the correction of a few small inadvertencies which had escaped the accurate author, and the references to texts of scripture, especially the verses in the margin, which were but of little use, and are omitted to save room; as also are the numerous references in the margin of the *Harmony*; the insertion of which would have been more troublesome both to the Editor and the Printer, than useful to the reader. This omission is in part supplied by the running titles, which however could not be made to express the contents of each page: they are the same as are found at the head of each section; the *Titles* of which are most of them considerably abridged.

It has been my object by every suitable means to reduce this voluminous work within the present compass† (though it has somewhat exceeded the limits of the estimate) and at the same time to render it as full and comprehensive as possible. Nor has due care been wanting in regard to the accuracy of the printing, particularly in distinguishing between the *Text* and the *explanatory words*, in which respect the octavo editions are grossly defective. The labour has been great, but not superior to the pleasure. May the Reader's profit be equal!

S. P.

* These are here entitled *Reflections*, in conformity to Mr. ORTON, and it seems a more suitable term.

† Mr. Gentleman's proposals were for Three Volumes.

THE HISTORY OF CHRIST,

AS RECORDED BY THE
EVANGELISTS.

SECTION I.

Luke's preface to his history, dedicated to Theophilus, a Christian friend of considerable rank. LUKE i. ver. 1—4.

- 1 **W**HEREAS many* have undertaken to compose the history of those facts which have been confirmed among us with
2 the fullest evidencet, as they have transmitted them to us, who were from the beginning eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word;
3 I also having accurately traced† all these things from their first rise, have thought it proper to write an orderly account of them
4 to thee, O most noble Theophilus||; that thou mayest know the certain truth of those things in which thou hast been instructed§.

* This must refer to some histories of the life of Christ which are now lost.

† I think the Greek word is rather to be understood as referring to the fullness of that evidence with which the facts were attended, than to the confidence with which were they believed.

‡ The original plainly signifies that accuracy of investigation on which the perfect understanding of his subject was built.

|| The Greek word *Κατὰ* was then, as Excellency among us is, a title of honour and respect usual in addressing noble personages (see Acts xxiii. 26; xxiv. 3; xxvi. 25), and it might with some peculiar propriety be applied here, as Theophilus was so worthy the name he bore, which signifies a lover of God.

§ The word doth with great accuracy express the instructions given to those who were training up for an admission to the Christian church, whose name of *Catechumens* was, as it is well known, derived from hence, and applied without any particular regard to the age of the persons. See Acts xviii. 25. Rom. ii. 19. The English word [*catechised*] most literally answers to the Greek, but it is now almost wholly appropriated to children.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us humbly adore the Divine Goodness, that facts of so great importance as these now to be laid before us were not left to the uncertainty of oral tradition, but delivered to the church in writing, by persons who had so many opportunities of learning the truth, and have given such full proof of their integrity in relating it.—Let us be thankful that we have not only one such history, but that several undertook this excellent and necessary work, by whose united testimony the whole is confirmed; while it is also illustrated by the variety of their narrations, each inserting some considerable circumstance which the rest have omitted. Let us rejoice in that providential care which hath preserved this invaluable treasure through so many succeeding ages, and some of them periods of the grossest darkness and the hottest persecution.

While we study this *orderly series* of sacred story, let us be concerned that our faith may be established by it, and our other graces proportionably advanced; maintaining a continual dependence on that blessed Spirit, by whose *instruction* it was written, to lead us into wise and pious reflections upon it.

From the care which this holy evangelist expresseth for the edification and comfort of his friend Theophilus, let us learn to regard it as one of the most important offices of friendship to labour for the spiritual advantage of each other; by endeavouring not only to awaken and instruct those that are entirely unacquainted or unaffected with divine things, but also, as we have opportunity, to confirm the faith and quicken the zeal of the most established Christians with whom we converse. Happy the men whose tongues and whose pens are employed in so good a work: may they never, in the remotest ages, fail of some excellent *Theophilus* to welcome and encourage their pious attempts!

SECTION II.

John begins his gospel with a very sublime and emphatical account of the deity and incarnation of Christ; and of those glorious and important purposes for which he condescended to appear among us in the human nature. JOHN i. 1—14.

- 1 **I**N the beginning existed the [Logos or] Word. And the Word
- 2 **I** was with God, and the Word was God. This [Word] was in
- 3 the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without
- 4 him was not made so much as one single being. That which was
- 5 in him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not apprehend it.
- 6 A man, whose name was John, was sent as a messenger from
- 7 God. He came for a witness, that he might testify concerning the
- 8 light, that all might by his means believe. He *himself* was not
- 9 that light, but [came] to bear witness concerning it. The true
- 10 light was that which, coming into the world, enlighteneth every
- man. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, yet

- 11 the world knew him not. He came into his own [territories,*]
 12 yet his own [people] did not receive him. Nevertheless to as
 many as received him, and believed on his name, [even] to them,
 13 he granted the privilege of becoming the sons of God; who were
 not born of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man,
 but of God.
 14 And the Word was made flesh, and pitched his tabernacle†
 among us: and we contemplated his glory: such a glory as be-
 came the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

REFLECTIONS.

Justly hath our Redeemer said, Blessed is the man that is not offended in me: and we may peculiarly apply the words to that great and glorious doctrine of *the deity of Christ*, which is here before us. A thousand high and curious thoughts will naturally arise in our corrupt hearts on this view of it; but may Divine grace subdue them all to the obedience of an humble faith; so that, with Thomas, we may each of us fall down at his feet, and cry out with sincere and unreserved devotion, My Lord and my God!

Let us adore him as the Creator and Preserver of all, the overflowing Fountain of *light and life*. Let us with unutterable pleasure hail this *Sun of righteousness*, whose rays, by the tender mercies of the Father, have visited our benighted world to guide our feet into the way of peace: and while we lament that *the darkness* hath not apprehended and received him, let us earnestly pray that he may ere long penetrate every cloud of ignorance and mist of error, and may diffuse among all the nations knowledge and grace, purity and joy. Let us especially pray that he may penetrate our beclouded souls; and that they may, in holy correspondence to the purposes of his appearing, be turned as clay to the seal. *The world knew him not*; but may we know him, and give him that honourable and grateful reception which so great a favour may justly demand!—Yet what returns can be proportionable to his condescension in *becoming flesh* for us, and *pitching his tabernacle* among miserable and sinful mortals?—Happy apostles that beheld his glory! And surely there are in his word such reflections of it as we may also behold, and as will oblige us to acknowledge it to be a glory that became the *Only-begotten of the Father*.

Let us cordially receive him as *full of grace and truth*, that we also may stand entitled to the privileges of *God's children*. And if we are already of that happy number, let us not arrogate the glory of it to ourselves, or ascribe it entirely to those who have been the instruments of this important change; but remember that of his own will God hath begotten us by the word of his power, and that of him we are in *Christ Jesus*: to him then let us refer the ultimate praise, if that divine and almighty Saviour be made unto us *wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*. 1 Cor. i. 30.

* Such is the manifest difference between the terms in the Greek, *idia* and *idios*.

† A visible reference to the dwelling of the Schechinah in the tabernacle of Moses.

SECTION III.

An angel appears to Zacharias to give him notice of the birth of John the Baptist; and his mother on her conception retires. LUKE i. 5—25.

- 5 **I**N the days of Herod, king of Judea*, there was a priest named Zacharias, who belonged to the course of Abiah†: and his wife was one of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous in the sight of God, walking in all the commands and institutions of the Lord, blameless.
- 6 And they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.
- 7 And it came to pass, that when he was performing the priest's office before God, in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right hand of the altar of incense. And Zacharias, seeing [him] was greatly discomposed, and terror fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias; for thy prayer is heard: and Elizabeth thy wife shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John‡. And thou shalt have joy and transport, and many shall rejoice on occasion of his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall drink neither wine|| nor intoxicating liquor; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he shall turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him, in the spirit and power of Elijah§, to convert the hearts of the fathers with the children, and those who have been disobedient to the wisdom of the just shall he make ready, a people prepared for the Lord.
- 18 And Zacharias said to the angel, By what shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years. And the angel, answering, said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God, and I am sent to speak to thee, and to tell thee these joyful tidings. And behold, thou shalt be silent, and unable to speak, till the day in which these things shall be accomplished, because thou hast not believed my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.
- 21 And the people were waiting for Zacharias to dismiss them¶; and they wondered that he continued so long in the temple. But

* i. e. Herod, who was called *the great*, appointed by the Romans, to whom Judea was subject.

† Abiah, or Abijah, was the head of one of the 24 courses into which David distributed the priests. See 1 Chron. xxiii. 6. xxiv. 10.

‡ Which signifies the grace or favour of God.

|| Like the ancient Nazarites. Numb. vi. 3.

§ Mal. iv. 6.

¶ With his blessing. See Numb. vi. 33. Lev. ix. 22, 23.

- when he came out he was not able to speak to them ; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple ; and he himself, by signs, intimated [it] to them : and *he* continued deaf and dumb.
- 23 And it came to pass that, when the days of his ministration were fulfilled, he departed to his own house.
- 24 And after these days Elizabeth his wife conceived, and concealed herself five months, saying, The Lord hath thus done for me, in the days in which he hath looked upon me, to take away my reproach of *barrenness* among men.

REFLECTIONS.

How amiable is the character of this pious pair, who were found *walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless !* May our behaviour be thus unblamable, and our obedience thus sincere and universal ! And let those, whose office leads them nearer to God than others, remember their peculiar obligation to imitate such an example.

Let us observe, with pleasure, that the *prayers* which such worshippers offer *come up with acceptance* before God ; to whom no costly perfume is so sweet as the fragrancy of a character like this.—*An answer of peace* was here returned when the case seemed to be most helpless. Let us learn to *wait patiently for the Lord*, and leave it to his own infinite wisdom to choose the time and manner in which he shall appear for us.

Zacharias, accustomed as he was to converse with the God of heaven, was nevertheless, as we see, thrown into great consternation at the appearance of his angelic messenger. And may we not regard it, therefore, as an instance of the goodness as well as wisdom of God, that he determines that the services which these heavenly spirits render us should be generally invisible ?—It is delightful to observe that amiable condescension with which *Gabriel*, the courtier of heaven, behaved on this occasion. Let it teach us with pleasure to pursue the humblest offices of duty and love which God may assign us towards any of our fellow-servants, even in the lowest stations.

Happy was the holy *Baptist* in being employed in this blessed work of preparing men's hearts to receive a Saviour, and reducing *the disobedient to the wisdom of the just*. May we be inspired with some degree of zeal like his, in our proper sphere, to pursue so noble a design !

We see, in the instance of *Zacharias*, that some remainders of *unbelief* may be found even in a faithful heart : let us guard against them, as remembering they will be displeasing to God, and hurtful to ourselves.—And, to conclude, when Providence favours us with any peculiarly gracious interpositions, let us attentively remark the hand of God in them ; and let religious *retirement* leave room for serious recollection and devout acknowledgments.

SECTION IV.

The angel Gabriel is sent to the virgin Mary, to inform her of the conception of Christ by her. LUKE i. 26—38.

- 26 **I**N the sixth month *after Elizabeth had conceived*, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee, called Nazareth,
 27 to a virgin, *who was* contracted to a man whose name was Joseph,
 28 of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel entered in unto her, and said, Hail, O thou favourite! the Lord is with thee. 'Thou art blessed among women.
 29 Now when she saw [the angel,] she was disturbed at his discourse, and reasoned with herself what kind of salutation this
 30 could be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for
 31 thou hast found favour with God. And behold, thou shalt be with child, and be delivered of a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.
 32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give him the throne of David his father.
 33 And he shall rule over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.
 34 And Mary replied to the angel, How can this be, since I am as
 35 yet a virgin? And the angel, answering, said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: and therefore that holy Offspring of thine
 36 shall be called the Son of God. And behold, thy cousin Elizabeth also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth
 37 month with her who hath long been called barren; for nothing will
 38 be impossible to God. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; may it be unto me according to thy word! Then the angel departed from her.

REFLECTIONS.

With what holy wonder and pleasure should we trace this notice of an *incarnate Redeemer*? and how thankfully should we adore his condescending goodness, that for us men, and for our salvation, he did not despise the womb of so obscure a *virgin*?

We too are ready in our thoughts, with *Gabriel*, to congratulate her on so distinguished an honour, and to say, as one did to *Christ*, in the days of his flesh, *Blessed is the womb that bare thee, O Lord, and the breasts which thou hast sucked!* But let us remember there is yet a nobler *blessedness* than this attending those, in whose hearts he is so formed by divine grace, that they *hear his word, and do it*.

Let us hear it, with joy, that he is Jesus the Saviour; but let us also consider that he is Christ the anointed Sovereign, who is to rule over God's people for ever. Remember, O my soul, that of his kingdom there shall be no end; and esteem it thine unspeakable honour and happiness to be enrolled among his faithful subjects.

The glories promised to such in the future state are so far beyond experience, or even imagination, that they might, to sense, appear as incredible as the message which Mary received: but let us remember the eternal truth of what Gabriel suggested to her, that no-

thing is impossible to God. He can therefore ripen our imperfect souls to all the improvement and pleasures of the heavenly state, as easily as he produces the meanest vegetable on the earth.

Let the temper of the blessed virgin, on this great occasion, be therefore the beautiful model of ours: so, when the purposes of the Divine Love are declared to us, may we resign ourselves unto the Lord; and with such calm tranquillity, firm faith, and joyful acquiescence, may we wait the accomplishment of his gracious promise, and say, Behold the servants of the Lord! be it unto us according to his word! So do thou, O Lord, animate and support us! and the weakest of thy children shall not stumble at the greatest of thy promises through unbelief; but, being strong in faith, shall give glory to God.

SECTION V.

Mary visits Elizabeth: her faith is confirmed by it, and she breaks out into a song of Praise. LUKE i. 39—56.

39 **I**N those days Mary arose and went with expedition to the Hill-
40 country, into a city of Judah, and entered into the house of *her*
41 *kinsman* Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass that, as soon as Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant in her womb did leap. And Elizabeth was filled with the holy
42 Spirit; and crying out with a loud voice she said, Blessed art thou
43 among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this *honour* done to me, that the mother of my Lord
44 should come unto me? For, behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the infant leaped in my womb
45 for joy. And happy is she that believed; for there shall be an accomplishment of those things which have been spoken to her from the Lord.

46 *Then* Mary also said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my
47 spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour; for he hath looked upon the
48 low estate of his handmaid: for all future generations shall call
49 me happy. For he who is powerful hath done great things for
50 me; and his name *is* holy. His mercy also *is* from generation to
51 generation on them that fear him. He hath wrought strength by his arm. he hath dispersed the haughty in the imagination of
52 their hearts. He hath brought down mighty potentates from
53 their thrones, and hath exalted the lowly. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and hath sent away the rich empty. He hath succoured Israel his child, in remembrance of his everlasting
55 mercy, even as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed.

56 Then Mary abode with her *cousin Elizabeth*, about three months, and returned to her own house.

REFLECTIONS.

How natural is it for those, who have themselves received mercy of the Lord, to communicate their joy to others, and to seek the

society of their fellow saints, whom he hath honoured with the signal manifestations of his favour?—Happy are they, whose friendship is confirmed and heightened by such endearing ties! And thrice happy the humble and generous souls who can thus, like Elizabeth, lose the thoughts of private honour and interest in a cordial concern for the glory of God and the good of men; rejoicing to see others, perhaps in some respects their inferiors, raised to stations of service more distinguished than their own!

If this pious matron thought herself so highly honoured in receiving a visit from the mother of our infant Saviour, how much more doth it become us to admire the condescension of our glorious Lord, that he will represent himself as graciously knocking at the door of our hearts, and ready not only to make us a transient visit, but to take up his stated abode with us?

May our faith, like that of the blessed virgin, delightfully rest on all the promises he makes, as firmly believing that there shall be *an accomplishment of these things which are spoken!* And, while that accomplishment is delayed, may the pleasing expectation of it tune our voice to a song of praise like hers!—Let our souls also magnify the Lord, and our spirits rejoice in that God whom we hope, through grace, to be our Saviour; whose condescension hath regarded us in such low circumstances; and whose almighty power and everlasting love have done such great things for us.—He hath provided heavenly food, to satisfy our hungry souls; and hath raised us to enjoy the mercies which, in more obscure intimations only, he promised to the pious patriarchs.—His mercy is on all that fear him, through succeeding generations.—May such distinguished favours animate our hearts with those sentiments of devotion and zeal which they were so well qualified to excite! Otherwise the joy of the Old Testament saints, in the distant and imperfect prospect of these blessings, will testify against our insensibility in the superior advantages with which we are favoured.

SECTION VI.

The birth and circumcision of John the Baptist. LUKE i. 57—66.

57 **N**OW when the full time for Elizabeth's delivery was come,
 58 she brought forth a son. And her neighbours and her relations heard that the Lord had magnified his mercy to her, and
 59 congratulated her *on the occasion*. And it came to pass that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they *would have* called him Zacharias, after the name of his father*.
 60 But his mother answered and said, Nay, but he shall be called
 61 John. And they said unto her, None of thy kindred is called by
 62 this name. And they made signs to his father *to know* what he
 63 would have him called. And he *by signs* asked for a writing tab-

* The giving a name was no more a part of the original intent of Circumcision than of Baptism; it was an incidental circumstance which custom had added. The Father among the Ancients used to name the children.

- 64 let, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they were all amazed. And his mouth was immediately opened, and his tongue [loosed] and he spake praising God.
- 65 And a dread fell on all that dwelt near them: and all these things were published over the whole Hill-country of Judea.
- 66 And all that heard [them] laid them up in their hearts, saying, What kind of a child will this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him. *Through the divine blessing he appeared a healthful and hopeful child.*

REFLECTIONS.

So sure are the promises of God, and so certainly will the full accomplishment of them another day shame our suspicious, unbelieving hearts, and awaken the tongues of his servants to songs of praise! Happy the souls who, by a lively faith in them, are anticipating that blessed day, and whose minds, kept in tune by these pleasing views, are opening themselves to the most tender sympathy with others, and, like the kindred of this pious pair, are making the religious joys of others their own; so sharing, rather than envying, the superior favours bestowed upon them!

Let us learn, with them, wisely to observe what God is doing around us, and to lay up remarkable occurrences in our hearts: that, by comparing one step of divine conduct with another, we may the better *understand the loving-kindness of the Lord*, and be engaged to act with more regular obedience in a holy subserviency to his gracious purposes.

When, like good Zacharias and Elizabeth, we have the pleasure to see our infant offspring growing up in safety and cheerfulness, with healthy constitutions of body, and towardly dispositions of mind too, let us ascribe it to *the hand of the Lord*, which is *upon them for good*. Let us remember that we are at best but the instruments of the divine care and favour to them; and that our families would soon become scenes of desolation, did not God watch over them in a thousand circumstances of danger and distress, which no prudence of ours could have foreseen, and which no care of ours could have been able to provide against.

* SECTION VII.

Zacharias, on the birth of his son, breaks out into a sublime anthem of praise. LUKE i. 67, &c.

- 67 **N**OW *John being born*, Zacharias his father was filled with
 68 the holy Spirit and prophesied saying, Blessed be Jehovah
 the God of Israel, because he hath graciously looked upon his
 69 people, and wrought out redemption, and hath raised up for us a
 70 horn* of salvation, in the family of his servant David; as he hath

* A horn being the ornament and defence of the creature that wears it, is often used to express strength and dignity, and sometimes with a peculiar reference to the Messiah. *Psalms cxxxiii. 17. Sam. ii. 10, &c.*

- spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been from
 71 the beginning of time; that we may obtain salvation from our
 72 enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us : that he may per-
 form the mercy [promised] to our fathers, and be mindful of his
 73 holy covenant : the oath which he swore unto Abraham our father
 74 (*Gen. xxii. 16, 17,*) to grant us to serve him without fear, being
 75 delivered out of the hand of our enemies, [and to walk] before
 him all the days of our life, in holiness and righteousness.
 76 *Then turning to his new-born child, he added,* And thou, child,
 shalt be called The prophet of the Most High, for thou (*accord-*
ing to the prediction, Isa. xl. 3.) shalt go before the face of the
 77 Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation to his
 78 people in the forgiveness of their sins; through the tender com-
 passions of our God, by which the dawning of the day hath visited
 79 us from on high : to enlighten those that sit in darkness, and in
 the shadow of death, to direct our feet into the way of peace.
 80 And the child grew up, and became strong in spirit; and
 was in desert places till the day of his being manifested to Israel,
under his prophetic character.

REFLECTIONS.

With what sacred joy should we join in this hymn of praise ! The blessings celebrated in it were not peculiar to the family of Zacharias or to the house of Israel ; but we, through the divine goodness, have our share in them : the Lord God of Israel *hath visited and redeemed* us. He hath remembered his covenant with the pious patriarchs in favour of millions who are their seed only as heirs of the faith of Abraham.—To us hath he accomplished the words he had spoken by his holy prophets, and through his tender mercies hath caused the Sun of Righteousness to arise upon us ; upon us who were once indeed *sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death* ; and whose ancestors, for many succeeding generations, were lost in ignorance, idolatry, and wickedness. Let us bless the Lord, who hath *given us light* ; and make it our daily prayer that it may be the happy means of guiding our feet into the way of peace.—Let us, with pleasure and thankfulness, receive the knowledge of salvation by the remission of our sins, without which we shall never see it but at an unapproachable distance.

Let us repose our cheerful confidence in this Almighty Saviour, this *Horn of Salvation*, which God's own right-hand hath raised up for us : through him let us seek the pardon of our sins, and deliverance from all the enemies of our souls. And let a grateful sense of his redeeming love engage us resolutely to walk in the strictest *holiness and righteousness*, as in the presence of God, and carefully to maintain before him a conscience void of offence all the days of our lives.—May we carry this temper along with us into solitude and retirement : may it animate us in the busiest scenes of life ; and, in every particular instance, may it determine us in our choice of either, and regulate our conduct in both !

SECTION. VIII.

Joseph's suspicions concerning Mary removed by the appearance of an angel. MATT. i. 18, &c.

18 **N**OW the birth of JESUS CHRIST was thus: His mother Mary being contracted to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child by *the miraculous operation* of the holy
 19 Spirit. Now Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and being by no means willing to expose her unto public infamy, purposed to have divorced her privately, *as the law of Moses would*
 20 *have allowed.* And as he was revolving these things in his mind, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said: Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take home Mary thy
 21 wife; for that which is begotten in her is of the holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins.

22 Now all this was done that this might be accomplished which
 23 the Lord had spoken by the prophet (Isa. vii. 14.) who said, Behold a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name EMMANUEL*, which being translated signifies, GOD
 WITH US.

24 Then Joseph, arising from his sleep, did as the angel of the
 25 Lord had appointed him, and took home his wife, and knew her not *as a wife* till she had brought forth her son, the first-born. And he called his name Jesus.

REFLECTIONS.

We see here, in Joseph, an excellent pattern of gentleness and prudence. In an affair which appeared dubious, he chose, as we should always do, rather to err on the favourable than on the severe extreme. He was careful to avoid any precipitate steps; and, in the moments of deliberation, God interposed to guide and determine his resolves.—With what wonder and pleasure did he receive these glad-tidings! With what pleasure should we also receive them! For we too are informed of Jesus who came *to save his people from their sins.* An important and glorious salvation indeed! Hosannah to him that cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed Jesus! answer thy character in delivering us not only from sin's condemning, but from its reigning, power!

Let our souls bow to *Emmanuel*, our incarnate God: and while with holy wonder we survey the various scenes of his humiliation, let us remember too his native dignity and his divine glory. By him God hath fulfilled his ancient promises, in the most ample and glorious manner, in the fulness of time sending forth his son, made of a woman, and sprung like a tender shoot from the decayed stock of David his servant.—While we study the oracles of the Old Testament, let us with pleasure trace the notices of the great Messiah

* Bp. Pearson's derivation of the name *Jesus*, from *Jah*, plainly shews how this prediction was accomplished.

there, even of Jesus, to whom all the prophets give witness. May his name be ever inscribed upon our hearts! In that name may we lift up our banners, and judge those reproaches a glory which we may meet with in his sacred cause!

SECTION IX.

The genealogy of Christ from Abraham, as recorded by Matthew, and from Adam by Luke. MATT. i. 1—17. LUKE iii. 23, &c.

MATT. **T**HE genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham.

- 2 Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat
- 3 Judah and his brethren. And Judah (*to whose line this genealogy is confined*) begat Pharez and Zarah *his twin-brother*, of Thamar.
- 4 And Pharez begat Esrom, and Esrom begat Aram, and Aram begat Aminidab, and Aminidab begat Naasson, and Naasson begat Salmon.
- 5 And *after their settlement in Canaan*, Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab, and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth *the moabitess*, and Obed begat
- 6 Jesse. And Jesse begat David the king. And David the king begat Solomon of Bathsheba, *who had before been* [the wife] of
- 7 Uriah. And Solomon begat Rehoboam, *from whose government the ten tribes revolted under Jeroboam*. And Rehoboam begat Abijah, and Abijah begat Asa, and Asa begat the good Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat begat Jehoram (*who unhappily dishonoured the holy family by an alliance with Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab*). And (*to omit his immediate descendants**) Jehoram may be said to
- 9 have begot Uzziah the leper. And Uzziah begat Jotham, and Jotham begat the wicked Ahaz, and Ahaz begat the religious
- 10 Hezekiah. And Hezekiah begat Manasseh, and Manasseh begat that hardened sinner Amon, and Amon begat that emi-
- 11 nently pious prince Josiah. And Josiah begat Jehoiakim and his brethren; and about the time of the Babylonish captivity, Jehoiakim begat Jeconiah†.
- 12 And after the Babylonish captivity, Jeconiah begat Salathiel, and Salathiel begat Zerubbabel, *that illustrious instrument of restoring and settling the Jewish commonwealth*. And Zerubbabel begat Abiud, and Abiud begat Eliakim, and Eliakim begat Azor:
- 14 and Azor begat Zadock, and Zadock begat Achim, and Achim begat Elihud: and Elihud begat Eleazar, and Eleazar begat Matthan,
- 16 and Matthan begat Jacob: and *this* Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born JESUS, who is called Christ, *God's Messiah or anointed one*

* It is undeniably evident from 2 Chron. xxii. &c. that three princes are here omitted. We may suppose it was by some peculiar divine direction that the sin of Jeroboam is thus animadverted upon even to the fourth generation; his intermediate descendants being thus blotted out of the records of Christ's family.

† I here follow the Bodleian and other MSS. noticed in the margin of the Bible, which seems necessary to keep up the number of fourteen generations.

17 So that all the generations from Abraham to David, are fourteen generations ; and from David to the Babylonish captivity, may be counted fourteen generations*. And from the Babylonish captivity to Christ, fourteen generations.

This is the genealogy of the reputed Father of Christ.—The following, by Luke, ascends to Adam, and traces his descent in the line of Mary his mother.

LUKE. And Jesus when beginning [his ministry] was about 23 thirty years old, being (as was reckoned) the son of Joseph, the 24 son of Heli† the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, 25 the son of Jannah, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Eli, the son of Naggai, 26 the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Shimei, the son 27 of Joseph, the son of Judah, the son of Johanna, the son of Rhessa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Salathiel, the son of Neri, the 28 son Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmodam, 29 the son of Er, the son of Joses, the son of Eliezar, the son of Jorim, 30 the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonan, the son of Eliakim, the son of Meleth, the son of Mainan, the son of Mattathias, the son of Nathan, 32 the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Naasson, the son of Aminadab, the son of Aram, the son of Esrom, the son of Phares, the son 34 of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, 35 the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, the son of Serug, the son of Ragau or Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Heber, the son of Salah, 36 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son 37 of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan 38 the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

REFLECTIONS.

When we survey any such series of generations, it is obvious to reflect how, like the leaves of a tree, *one passeth away and another cometh* ; yet the earth still abideth, and with it the goodness of the Lord, which runs on from generation to generation, the common hope of parents and children.

Of those who formerly lived upon earth, and perhaps made the most conspicuous figure among the children of men, how many have there been whose names have perished with them ! and how many of whom nothing but their names are remaining ! Thus are we passing away, and thus shall we be shortly forgotten. Happy if, while we are forgotten of men, we are remembered by God, and our names are found written in the book of life ! There they will make a much brighter appearance than in the records of fame, or than they would do even in such a catalogue of those who were related to Christ ac-

* That is, reckoning the three above omitted.

† i. e. by adoption, or rather by the marriage of his daughter. It is necessary to take the words in this latitude, because the true father of Joseph appears to have been Jacob (or James) the son of Matthan. See Matt i. 15, 16.

cording to the flesh; whose memory is here preserved, when that of many, who were once the wonder and terror of the mighty in the land of the living, is lost in perpetual oblivion.

We observe, among these ancestors of Christ, some that were Heathens, and others that, on different accounts, were of infamous characters; and perhaps it might be the design of Providence that we should learn from it, or at least should, on reading it, take occasion to reflect, that persons of all nations, and even the chief of sinners amongst them, are encouraged to trust in him as their Saviour. To him therefore let us look, even from the ends of the earth, yea from the depths of guilt and distress, and the consequence will be happy beyond all expression or conception.

Adam, though originally the Son of God, lost that inheritance of life and glory which, in consequence of such a relation, he might reasonably have expected; but the *second Adam* repairs the loss which we had sustained by the transgression of the first. We are now *predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ*, and raised by him to the hope of a fairer inheritance than the terrestrial Paradise. Let it be our daily labour to secure this invaluable blessing; that so, as we have borne the image of the earthly Adam, we may in due time bear the image of the heavenly, and at length attain to the perfect manifestation of the sons of God.

SECTION X.

Christ born at Bethlehem; his birth revealed by an angel to some shepherds: his circumcision. LUKE ii. 1—21.

- 1 **N**OW it came to pass in those days that Augustus Cæsar published an edict, that all the land of *Judea* should be enrolled*.
- 2 And this was the first enrollment of Cyrenius (*or Quirinius a*
- 3 *Roman senator*) afterwards governor of Syria. And all went,
- 4 each of them to his own *native* city to be enrolled†. And Joseph went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (for he
- 5 was of the family and household of David) to be enrolled, with Mary his wife, who was big with child.
- 6 And so it was that, while they were there, the days were fulfilled
- 7 that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her son, the first-born, and swathed him, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.
- 8 And there were shepherds in that country, lying out in the field
- 9 and watching over their flocks by night. And behold an angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round
- 10 about them. And they were exceedingly terrified. And the angel said unto them, "Be not affrighted, for behold, I bring you

* *i. e.* registered, intended with a view to lay them under a Tax.

† A circumstance wisely ordered by Providence, to verify the ancient prophecies, and introduce the Messiah, as hereby the subjection of the Jews to the Romans remarkably appeared.

- 11 good news of great joy, which shall be to all people : for this day there is born unto you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David *his royal father*.—And this [shall be] a sign to you : you will find an infant in swaddling-bands, lying in a manger.”
- 13 And immediately there was with the angel a multitude of the celestial army, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, benevolence towards men !”
- 15 And it came to pass that as soon as the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Come, let us go to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is done, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came in haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in a manger. And when they had viewed it, they published abroad that which had been told them concerning this child. And all that heard it were astonished at those things which were related to them by the shepherds.
- 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, entering into the meaning [of them] in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying God for all the things which they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. And when eight days were fulfilled* to circumcise the child, his name was called JESUS, by which the angel had called him before he was conceived in the womb.

REFLECTIONS.

With what humble amazement should we contemplate this first appearance of our incarnate Redeemer ! Surely all the angels of heaven might justly have admired his condescension in assuming such a nature as ours, and wearing a mortal frame, though it had been attended with all the ornaments and splendors earth could have given it. Though, at his entrance into our low world, he had been born of an imperial family, placed under a canopy of velvet and gold, or laid to repose on pillows of down, all this had been deep abasement in the eyes of those who had beheld the glories of his celestial throne, and the honors paid him by cherubims and seraphims. But, behold the Son of God, and the Heir of all things, is not merely in the abodes of men, but in a place destined for beasts, and, while wrapped in swaddling clothes, is laid in a manger !

Yet, O blessed Jesus, how much more venerable was that stable and manger, when graced with thy sacred presence, than the most magnificent palace, or most shining throne of earthly princes ! How ill doth it become thy disciples to seek for themselves great things in this life, or to be proud of its pomp and grandeur ! Give us, O God, the simplicity of children, and make us willing to be conformed to the birth of thy Son as well as to his death !

Yet, mean as his birth might appear, his Heavenly Father did not leave him without witness. We see him, in this wonderful account that the Evangelist hath given us, surrounded with a brighter lustre than a court or a crown could have afforded. Angelic legions are employed as heralds to proclaim the new-born King. And to whom are they sent ? To humble pious shepherds, diligently employ-

* That is, when the eighth day was come.

ed in the duties of their proper calling, and watching by night for the security of their flocks. Who would not gladly have shared in their poverty and fatigue, to have heard with them these good tidings of great joy?

Let us observe with what delight these courtiers of heaven undertook the happy embassy to these lowly mortals. Let us with pleasure attend to the anthem of these benevolent spirits. Far from envying the favour that was done us, they ascribe glory to God for it, and take their part in the joy they give. Let this love of the whole heavenly host to us awaken our love to them, and our longing for that blessed world where we and they shall surround our dearest Redeemer, not in such a form of abasement as that in which he here appeared, but clothed in that celestial lustre with which God hath rewarded the humiliations of the manger and the cross.

In the mean time, let our more intimate concern in this great salvation engage us more cordially to join with these blessed angels in their hallelujahs; ascribing *glory to God in the highest* for this peace on earth, this good-will towards men, the great fountain of our present tranquillity and future hope! Above all, if Divine Grace hath conquered all the foolish prejudices of our hearts against Christ, and taught us with humble faith to apply to him, let us, with the shepherds, bless God for the things which have been shewn us, and make it our care to spread abroad the savour of his name, that others may join with us in paying their homage and their praises to him!

SECTION XI.

The purification of Mary: Christ presented in the temple: the testimony given him by Simeon and Anna. LUKE ii. 22—39.

- 22 **A**ND when the forty days for her purification according to
the law of Moses were fulfilled, the parents of Jesus brought
23 him to Jerusalem to present him before the Lord; according as
it is written in the law of the Lord, that every first-born male shall
24 be called holy to the Lord; and to offer a sacrifice, according to
what is enjoined in the law of the Lord; a pair of turtle-doves, or
two young pigeons.
- 25 And behold there was at Jerusalem a man whose name was
Simeon, and he was a righteous and religious person, waiting for
26 the consolation of Israel;* and the holy Spirit was upon him: and
it was revealed unto him that he should not die before he had seen
27 the anointed of the Lord. And he came under the impulse of the
Spirit into the temple, when his parents brought the child Jesus
that they might do for him according to the custom of the law.
- 28 And he took him into his arms and praised God, and said, "Now;
29 O Lord, thou dismissest thy servant in peace, according to thy
30 word; for mine eyes have beheld thy salvation, which thou hast

* A phrase frequently used for a description of the Messiah. Isa. xlix. 13. Jer. xxxi. 13. Zech. i. 17.

31 prepared before the face of all people ; a light for the illumination
32 of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”

33 And Joseph and his mother were astonished at those things
34 which were spoken by him. And Simeon blessed them, and said
to Mary his mother, “ Behold this [child] is appointed for the
fall and rising again of many in Israel ; and for a mark* of contra-
35 diction. Yea a dart shall pierce through thine own soul, that the
reasonings of many hearts may be disclosed.”

36 And there was also one Anna a prophetess, the daughter of Pha-
nuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very far advanced in years,
having lived *only* seven years with a husband from her virginity :
37 and she *had been* a widow about eighty-four years ; who departed
not from the temple ; serving [God] with fasting, and prayers,
38 night as well as day. And she coming at that very time, made
her acknowledgments to the Lord *Jesus*, and *afterwards* spake con-
cerning him to all her acquaintance in Jerusalem that were waiting
for the promised redemption.

39 And when they (*the parents of Jesus*) had performed all things
according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their
own city Nazareth, *where he passed the days of his childhood and
youth.*

REFLECTIONS.

Who can behold the pious Simeon thus welcoming death, whilst he embraced his Saviour, without wishing to pass over the intermediate moments of life to meet so peaceful a dissolution? May we, like him, approve ourselves the faithful servants of God ; and then we may hope that, when our dismissal comes, we shall share in his serenity and joy !—We may comfortably expect it, if our eyes are now opened to behold with wonder and delight the great salvation he has prepared for his people ; and if our hearts, with our lips, are frequently praising him for this light which he hath given to *lighten the Gentiles*, as well as to be the glory of his people Israel.

As such may Christ be universally owned and adored, both by Jews and Gentiles ! In the mean time, while he is set up as a *mark of contradiction* and contempt, let us not be ashamed of him or of his words ; but rather let those indignities which are offered to him be as a sword to pierce through our own souls. Let us remember that the gospel, with all the difficulties which attend it, is the great touchstone by which God will try the characters of all to whom it comes. May our ready acceptance of it, and our zealous adherence to that sacred cause, approve the humble sincerity with which we inquire into its evidence ; that Christ may not be to us a *stone of stumbling* and a *rock of offence*, but rather the means of raising us to God and happiness, even to that redemption for which they that wait shall never be ashamed !

Our circumstances in life are various. There are comparatively few who have such leisure for extraordinary devotion as was the privi-

* The word *expusio* seems here to be used for a mark or butt, to shoot or dart at ; which finely intimates the deliberate malice and hellish artifice with which the character and person of Christ were assailed, while he *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself*. Heb. xii. 3.

lege of the pious Anna. Where it is found, let it be valued and improved! But how great and how many soever our engagements and entanglements in life may be, let the care of our souls be still our chief concern. Let us be *serving God*, in one sense or another, night and day; with prayers, pouring out our souls before him morning and evening; and at proper seasons adding fasting to prayer, and public solemnities to private retirements!

To conclude; let the example of these aged saints impress and animate those whose *hoary heads*, like theirs, are a *crown of glory*, being found in the way of righteousness. Let those venerable lips, so soon to be silent in the grave, be now employed in shewing forth the praises of their Redeemer. *Surely days should speak, and the multitude of years should teach, such wisdom.* Such fruit may they produce in old age: and may they have the pleasure to see all these pious attempts most thankfully received by the rising generation, and most gratefully improved by them; that they may quit the world with the greater tranquillity, in the view of leaving those behind them to whom Christ shall be as precious as he hath been to them, and who will be waiting for God's salvation, while they are gone to enjoy it! Amen.

SECTION XII.

The Sages come from the East to inquire after Christ, and being directed by a star to Bethlehem, pay him their homage. MATT. ii. 1—12.

- 1 **N**OW after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold [certain] Sages*, *wise and learned men called Magi*, came from the East country† to Jerusalem,
- 2 saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to prostrate ourselves before him‡.
- 3 And king Herod, when he heard [of this] was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had assembled all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where
- 6 it was that the Messiah was to be born. And they said unto him, At Bethlehem in Judea; for so it is written by the prophet (*Micah v. 2.*) “And thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda art by no

* Probably they were Gentile philosophers who, by a divine influence had been led to improve their knowledge of nature as the means of leading them to that of the one living and true God; and it is reasonable to suppose that he had favoured them with some extraordinary revelations of himself, as he did Melchizedec, Abimelech, Job, and others who did not belong to the Abrahamic Family.

† I think, with Grotius, they came from Arabia, which is often called the East (Gen. xxv. 6. Job i. 3, &c.) and was famous for gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

‡ A ceremony of great antiquity, still used to Eastern princes.

means the least among *the cities* of the princes of Judah, for out of thee shall come forth a Ruler who shall feed my people Israel*."

7 Then Herod, having secretly called the Sages, got exact infor-
 8 mation from them about what time the star appeared; and send-
 ing them to Bethlehem he said, Go and make a very exact inquiry
 9 concerning this child, and when you have found him, inform me,
 that I also may come and pay my homage to him. And having
 heard the king they departed; and behold the star or *meteor*†
 which they had seen in the East, moved on before them, till it
 10 came and stood over [the place] where the infant was. And when
 they saw the star they rejoiced with joy [which was] exceedingly
 11 great. And when they were come into the house, they found
 the young child with Mary his mother, and falling down they paid
 him homage, and opened their treasures, and presented him with
 12 gold and frankincense and myrrh‡. And being divinely admon-
 ished in a dream that they should not go back to Herod, they re-
 turned into their own country another way.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us observe, with pleasure, this further honour which God did to his only begotten Son, in ordering a new star to appear as the signal of his birth, and in calling these illustrious persons from afar to pay their early adorations to him. No doubt they thought such a discovery, as brought them to the feet of their infant Saviour, an ample recompense for all the fatigue and expense of such a journey. They were *exceedingly transported* when they saw the star. So let us rejoice in every thing which may be a mean of leading our souls to Christ, and of disposing us to cast ourselves down before him with humility and self-resignation!

Let us look upon this circumstance of the sacred story as a beautiful emblem of that more glorious state of the Christian church, when *the Gentiles shall come to its light*, and *sages and kings to the brightness of its rising*; when *the abundance of the sea shall be converted to it*, and *the wealth of the Gentiles shall be consecrated to its honour*. *The multitude of camels shall cover it, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord.* Isa. lx. 3, 5, 6.

How wonderful was the honour conferred upon so obscure a town as Bethlehem, when it was made thus illustrious among the thousands of Judah! Happy they who consecrate not only their gold and their

* The apostles did not always think it necessary exactly to transcribe the passages they cited from the Old Testament, but gave the general sense. If the above passage be read as an interrogation, *Art thou small?* it will solve the great difference which there seems to be between the prophet and the evangelist.

† I say *meteor*, because no *star* could point out a particular house, or even a town.

‡ It was customary to offer such presents to illustrious persons, and this was a most seasonable, providential assistance to furnish Joseph and Mary for their long and expensive journey into Egypt.

other possessions, but also their souls and their bodies, to that great Ruler, whose office it is to feed and govern the Israel of God; under whose conduct and care they shall receive blessings infinitely more valuable than all the treasures of the East or the West!—But oh, the fatal power of carnal influence on the heart! This engaged Herod to receive the news of a Redeemer's birth with horror; and, with execrable cruelty and vile hypocrisy, to contrive his murder under the specious form of doing him homage. Vain and self-confounding artifice! Let us rejoice in the thought, that *there is no understanding, or wisdom, or counsel, against the Lord*; no scheme so artfully disguised that he cannot penetrate it, or so politically formed that he cannot with infinite ease confound it.

To what perplexity and grief might these Sages have been brought had they been made even the innocent instruments of an assault on this Holy Child! But God delivered them from such an alarm, and happily guided their return; so that, through his care and favour, they carried home, in the tidings of the new-born Messiah, far richer treasures than they had left behind. Thus shall they, who *in all their ways acknowledge God*, by one method or another, find that he will graciously *direct their paths*.

SECTION XIII.

The flight into Egypt, the slaughter of the infants, and the settlement of the holy family at Nazareth. MATT. ii. 13—23.

- 13 **A**ND when they (*viz. the wise men*) were departed, behold the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Rise up and take the infant and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and continue there till I shall give thee notice to return; for Herod is about to search after the young child to destroy him.
- 14 And rising *immediately* he took the infant and his mother by night
- 15 and withdrew into Egypt. And they continued there till the death of Herod, that what was spoken of the Lord by the prophet *on another occasion* (Hos. xi. 1.) *might be fulfilled anew*, "Out of Egypt have I called my Son."
- 16 Then Herod, seeing that he was deluded* by the Sages, was exceedingly enraged, and sent forth a band of murderers, and slew all the male children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the confines of it, from their entrance upon the second year and under, according to the time of which he had got exact information from
- 17 the sages. Then that was fulfilled† which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet (xxxi. 15.) saying, "In Ramah there was a voice heard, lamentation and weeping, and abundant mourning, as

* Literally, played with.

† This can be only an allusion, for these lamented persons were not *slain* (see v. 17.) a sure argument that a passage, whether prophetic or not, may in the language of the New Testament be said to be *fulfilled*, when an event happens to which it may be accommodated.

if Rachel, risen from her grave†, was bewailing her lost children, and refused to be comforted because they are not||."

- 18 But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appear-
 20 eth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise and take the in-
 fant and his mother, and go *back* to the land of Israel, for they
 are dead who sought the young child's life. And he arose, and
 took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of
 22 Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus reigned over Judea,
 in the room of his father Herod, *knowing his cruelty*, he was afraid
 to go thither; but being *again* divinely admonished in a dream,
 he withdrew into the region of Galilee: *which was under the go-*
 23 *vernment of Herod Antipas, a prince of a milder character.* And
 he went and dwelt in a little city called Nazareth, that what had been
 spoken, *in effect*, by the prophets, might be fulfilled. "He shall
 be called a Nazarean¶:" *shall appear in mean circumstances and be*
treated with reproach

REFLECTIONS.

What is our fallen nature, that it can be capable of such enormities as we have now been surveying! Or what imaginable circumstances of grandeur and power can free the mind of an ambitious creature from servitude and misery! Who can behold Herod under the agitation of such a barbarous rage, and not see the vanity even of royal dignity, when the man that sways the sceptre over others hath no rule over his own spirit? Surely none of the innocent victims of Herod's wrath felt so much from the sword of their barbarous murderers as the guilty mind of the tyrant from its own unnatural transports.

The indignation which arises in our minds on the view of so much wickedness, finds a secret satisfaction in this thought. But how grievous is it to reflect on what the parents of these poor babes felt, while the sword that murdered their children in their very sight pierced through their own bowels! Happy, in comparison with these, were the wombs that never bare and the breasts that never gave suck! Let parents remember how soon their dearest hopes may be turned into lamentation, and learn to moderate their expectation from their infant offspring, and check too fond a delight in them.

Let us all learn to be very thankful that we are not under the arbitrary power of a tyrant, whose sallies of distracted fury might spread desolation through houses and provinces. Let us not say, Where was the great Regent of the universe when such a horrible butchery was transacted? His all-wise counsels knew how to bring good out of

† She was buried near this place.

|| Though Josephus does not notice this in particular, he relates many other instances of Herod's cruelty, from whence it might be supposed, there was not any thing so barbarous which such a tyrant was not capable of doing.

§ As Antipater, the heir apparent to the crown (a prince so ambitious and cruel that he had procured the death of his two elder brothers) died five days before Herod, both of them might be here referred to.

¶ If this solution be not allowed, I must admit, with Chrysostom, the passage referred to is lost.

all the evil of it. The agony of a few moments transmitted these oppressed innocents to peace and joy, while the impotent rage of Herod only heaped on his own head guilt, infamy, and horror. *He conceived mischief, and he brought forth vanity*; and while he studied to prevent the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom, and *set himself*, with impious rage, *against the Lord, and against his Anointed, He that sitteth in the heavens did laugh, yea, the Lord had him in derision.* That God, who discerns every secret purpose of his enemies, and foresees every intended assault, knows how, whenever he pleases, by a thought, by a dream, to baffle it.

The preservation of the holy child Jesus in Egypt may be considered as a figure of God's care over his church in its greatest danger. God doth not often, as he easily could, strike their persecutors with immediate destruction; but he provides a hiding-place for his people, and, by methods not less effectual, though less pompous, preserves his chosen seed from being swept away, even when the enemy comes in like a flood. Egypt, that was once the seat of persecution and oppression to the Israel of God, is now a refuge to his Son: and thus all places will be to us what Divine Providence will be pleased to make them. When, like Joseph and Mary, we are cut off from the worship of his temple, and perhaps removed into a strange land, he can be *a little sanctuary* to us, and give us, in his gracious presence, a rich equivalent for all that we have lost.

They continued here till he gave the signal for their departure: Let us, in like manner, remember that it is God's part to direct, and ours to obey; nor can we be out of the way of safety and of comfort while we are following his directions, and steering our course by the intimations of his pleasure! Jesus survived his persecutors, and returned into the land of Israel again; but such was his condescension, that he abode at Nazareth, which seems to have been allotted him as the most humble station. Let us never be unwilling to bear reproach for him, who from his infancy endured it for us; nor take offence at the meanness of his condition, whose removes were directed by angelic messengers, or immediate envoys from the God of heaven!

SECTION XIV.

Jesus, at the age of twelve years, comes up to the passover at Jerusalem, and discourses with the doctors in the temple. LUKE II. 40. &c.

- 40 **A**ND the child *Jesus* grew up and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.
 41 Now his parents went yearly to Jerusalem at the feast of the pass-
 42 over.* And when he was twelve years old,† *they took him with them when they went up to Jerusalem, according to the custom*
 43 *of the feast. And when they had finished the seven days of unleavened bread, and were returning home, the child Jesus staid*

* Comp. 1 Sam. i. 3. 7, 21.

† At that age the Jewish children came under the yoke of the law.

behind in Jerusalem, and neither Joseph nor his mother were
 44 aware [of it,] but, supposing he was in the company, they went a
 day's journey *before they missed him*: and *in the evening* they
 45 sought for him amongst their kindred and acquaintance. And not
 finding him they returned back to Jerusalem, seeking him *with*
 46 *great concern*. And three days after† they found him in the
 temple, sitting, among others, in the midst of the doctors, both at-
 47 tending to them and asking them questions.|| And all who heard
 him were in a transport of admiration at his understanding and
 answers.
 48 And when they (*viz. his parents*) saw him, they *also* were struck
 with wonder. And his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou
 dealt thus with us? behold thy father and I have sought thee with
 49 *inexpressible* anxiety. And he said unto them, What is the cause
 that you have *thus* sought me? Did ye not know that I ought to
 50 be at my Father's? And they did not understand the words which
 51 he spake unto them. And he went down with them and came to
 Nazareth, and continued subject to them. And his mother kept
 52 all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom
 and stature, and *grew* in favour with God and men.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us, who are heads of families, take occasion from the story before us to renew our resolutions, that we and our house will serve the Lord; and remember that it is a part of our duty, not only to God but to our domestics, to engage them with us in his public worship; the pleasures of which will surely be increased when we see them, and especially our dear children, joining with us in attendance on our great common Father.

Let children view the example of the holy child Jesus with an humble desire to copy after it. Let them love the house and ordinances of God, and thirst for the instructions of his good word. Let them think themselves happy if his servants in the ministry will bestow a part of their important time in those exercises which are especially suited for their instruction; and let them not only be careful to return the properest answers they can, but at convenient times, with modesty and respect, ask such questions as may be likely to improve them in knowledge and grace.

Let those children, whose genius is most promising and most admired, learn from the blessed Jesus to behave themselves in an humble and submissive manner to all their elders, and especially to their parents; for though he was the Lord of all, yet was he subject, not only to Mary his real mother, but to Joseph, though only supposed to be his father. Such children may well hope that the grace of God will still be upon them; and, growing in wisdom as they do in stature,

† *i. e.* the third day after they had left the city.

|| It is a great injury to his character to represent him as going up into the seats of the doctors, and *disputing* with them. They sat on semicircular benches, raised above their disciples, and Jesus with others, *sitting at their feet*, might be said to be in the midst of them. To *ask* as well as *answer* questions, was very usual.

they will also advance in favour with God and men, and be the darlings of heaven as well as of earth.

And oh, that the greatest and wisest of us, those of the longest standing, and of the most eminent stations in the church, might learn of this admirable and Divine Child; that, always remembering our relation to God, and ever intent on learning his will and promoting his glory, we might, with humble acquiescence, accommodate ourselves to all the disposals of his providence! How easily could he, who discovered such early marks of a sublime genius and a lively wit, have relished the most elegant delights of science, and have eclipsed all the most celebrated poets, orators, and philosophers, of that learned and polite age? But he laid all those views aside, that he might pursue the duties of that humble rank of life which his heavenly Father's infinite wisdom had assigned him; and joined, as it would seem, to assist in maintaining himself, and his parents too, by the daily labour of his hands. Let us learn from hence, that it is the truest greatness of soul to know our own place and office, and to deny ourselves those amusements of the mind, as well as those gratifications of the senses, which are inconsistent with the proper services of our different relations and callings.

SECTION XV.

The opening of John the Baptist's ministry. MARK i. 1—6. LUKE iii. 1—6. MATT. iii. 1—6.

THE beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God: As it is written in the prophets (*Mal. iii. 1.*) "Behold I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare the way before thee." So also by *Isaiah* (xl. 3.) "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee (i. e. *governor of that fourth part of his dominions*); and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene; in those days, while Annas and Caiaphas were high-priests, the word of God came unto John the Baptist, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness of Judea. And John did baptize in the wilderness, and came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and saying, "Repent ye, for the long expected kingdom of heaven is approaching."

As it is written in the book of discourses of the prophet *Isaiah*; for this is he who was spoken of (ch. xl. 3—5.) saying, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled up, and every mountain and hill shall be brought down: even the crooked roads shall be made straight, and the rough places shall be laid level*, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

* A reference to the custom of sending pioneers to level the way before princes. See *Grotius*.

Now this John wore a *rough* garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his waist†; and his food was locusts‡ and wild honey||. Then the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and all the land of Judea, and all the region round about Jordan went out to him, and were all baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

REFLECTIONS

With what pleasure should we hear the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God! and with what reverence remember the dignity of his divine nature amidst all the condescensions of his incarnate state!—It is surely matter of unspeakable thankfulness that the kingdom of heaven should be erected among men! that the great God should condescend so far as to take to himself a people from our mean and sinful world, and appoint his own Son to be the governor of that kingdom! How happy are we that it is preached among us and we are called into it! Let it be our great care that we be not only nominal, but real members of it.

For this purpose let us remember and consider that, to become the subjects of this kingdom, we are to enter into it by the way of repentance; humbly confessing our sins, and resolutely forsaking them, if we do indeed desire to find mercy. Let us bless God, both for the promises of pardon and for the appointment of the seals of it, particularly of baptismal washing; always remembering the obligation it brings upon us to *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*. And being ourselves become members of Christ's kingdom, let us pray that it may be every where extended. May Divine Grace remove every obstruction, and make a free course for his gospel, that it may every where run and be glorified, so that *all flesh may see the salvation of God!*

John, with this awful severity of manners and of doctrine, was sent before Christ to *prepare his way*. Let us learn to reflect how necessary it is that the law should thus introduce the gospel; and let all the terrors of Moses and Elias render the mild and blessed Redeemer so much the more welcome to our souls!

SECTION XVI.

John admonishes those that attended his ministry, and proclaims the approach of the Messiah. MATT. iii. 7—12. MARK i. 7, 8. LUKE iii. 7—18.

MATT. **A**ND when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism (*knowing the hypocrisy of the one, and the profaneness of the other*) he said unto them, O ye broods of vipers! who hath admonished you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. And do not think to say, We have Abraham for our father;

† As the ancient prophets did. 2 Kings i. 8. Zach. xiii. 4. Rev. vi. 12. xi. 3.

‡ Large winged grasshoppers (Rev. ix. 3. 7. 9.) which the law allowed the Jews to eat (Lev. xi. 21, 22.) Pliny says, these made a considerable part of the food of the Parthians and Ethiopians.

|| Comp. 1 Sam. xiv. 26. Jud. xiv. 8. Ps. lxxxi. 16.

for I say unto you, that God is able of these very stones to raise up children to Abraham And the axe is even now applied to the root of the trees ; therefore every tree that doth not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Luke. And the multitude asked him saying, What then shall we do ? And he answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart *one of them* to him that hath none ; and he that hath *plenty of food*, let him do the like. Then came also Publicans to be baptized (*whose office was to collect the taxes**) and said unto him, Master, what shall we do ? And he said unto them, *Exact nothing more than is enjoined you.* And the Soldiers also asked him saying, And what shall we do ? And he said unto them, *Terrify no man by a violent, overbearing conduct ; nor wrong any by false accusation ; and be content with your pay.*

And as the people were in suspense, and all were reasoning in their hearts concerning John, whether he were the Messiah or not, John answered all that *put the question to him*, saying, I indeed baptize you with water to repentance ; but there is one coming after me who is more powerful than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to carry, *or to stoop down and untie the latchet† of them.* He shall baptize you with the holy Spirit and with fire‡.

Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly *winnow and cleanse his threshing-floor*, and will gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff, *empty vain professors*, he will burn with unquenchable fire. And offering many other exhortations, he published to the people *these glad-tidings, of the Messiah's approach, and endeavoured to prepare them properly to receive him.*

REFLECTIONS.

What an excellent pattern of ministerial service does John exhibit in the passage before us ! Blessed is that gospel preacher who, like him, seeks not his own ease and pleasure, and indulges not to luxurious and sensual inclinations, but cheerfully accomodates himself to the state and circumstances which Providence hath assigned him, as infinitely more intent on the success of his ministry than on any little interest of his own that can interfere with it !—Happy the man who, imitating the impartiality of this faithful servant of God, giveth to every one *his portion of meat in due season*, and abhors the thoughts of flattering men in their vices, or buoying them up with delusive hopes in their birth and profession, while they are destitute of real and vital religion !

May this plain and awakening address be felt by every soul that hears it ! And, in particular, let the children of religious parents, let those that enjoy the most eminent privileges, and that make even the strictest profession, weigh themselves in this *balance of the sanctuary*, lest they be found *wanting* in the awful, decisive day. And if the

* Viz. those which the Romans had imposed on the Jews. They were generally infamous for their injustice and oppression.

† *The spring of the sandals then worn.* q. d. I should esteem it an honour to perform the humblest menial office for him.

‡ Comp. Acts i. 5. ii. 8.

warnings of the gospel have alarmed our hearts, and put us upon *fleeing from the wrath to come*, oh, let the terrors of the Lord engage us not only to confess but to forsake our sins, and to *bring forth fruits meet for repentance* !

Let all to whom the gospel message comes, most attentively and seriously consider in what alarming circumstances of danger and extremity impenitent sinners are here represented. The gospel is the last dispensation we must ever expect ; the axe is at the root of the unfruitful tree, and it must ere long be cut down and burnt, be its branches ever so diffusive and its leaves ever so green.

Christ hath a fan in his hand to winnow us as well as the Jews. Oh that we may stand the trial ! And oh that, as his wheat, we may be laid up in the store-house of heaven, when *that day cometh which shall burn as an oven*, and when *all that do wickedly shall be consumed as stubble and be burnt up as chaff* !—That we may be prepared for that final trial, let us be earnest in our applications to our gracious Redeemer, that as we are *baptized with water* in his name, he would also *baptize us with the Holy Ghost and with fire* ; that, by the operations of his holy Spirit on our cold and stupid hearts, he would enkindle and quicken that divine life, that sacred love, that flaming, yet well governed zeal for his glory, which distinguishes the true Christian from the hypocritical professor, and is indeed the seal of God set upon the heart to mark it for eternal happiness.

SECTION XVII.

The testimony of John the Baptist noticed by John the Evangelist, and his own added to confirm it. JOHN I. 15—18.

- 15 **A**S the Messiah was shortly to appear, and the time just at hand when he was to enter on his public ministry, John bore testimony of him, *applying it in particular to Jesus of Nazareth*, and cried, saying, "This is he of whom I said before, He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he existed before me."
- 16 And of his fulness have we all received, even grace upon grace.
- 17 For the law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by
- 18 Jesus Christ. No man hath ever seen God ; but the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath made him known.

REFLECTIONS.

Happy are they that (like this beloved apostle) when they hear the praises of Christ uttered by others, can echo back the testimony from their own experience, as having themselves *received of his fulness* ! May an abundance of grace be communicated from him to us ! We are not *straitened in him* ; oh, may we not be *straitened in ourselves* ; but, daily renewing our application to him as our living Head, may vital influences be continually imparted to our souls from him !

With pleasure let us compare the dispensation of Jesus with that of Moses, and observe the excellency of its superior grace and of its brighter truth : but let us remember, as a necessary consequence of

this, that if the despisers of Moses's law died without mercy, they shall be thought worthy of a much sorer punishment, and a more aggravated condemnation, who tread under foot the Son of God. May we ever regard him as the only-begotten of the Father; and, since he hath condescended so far as to come down from his very bosom to instruct us in his nature and will, let us with all humility receive his dictates, and earnestly pray that, under his revelations and teachings,* we may so know God as faithfully to serve him now, and at length eternally to enjoy him!

SECTION XVIII.

Christ is baptized by John, and the Spirit descends upon him. MARK I. 9—11. MAT. iii. 13, &c. LUKE iii. 21—23.

AND it came to pass in those days when all ranks of the people were baptized, that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee to John, that he might be baptized by him; and was accordingly baptized by John in Jordan, near Bethabara.

But John*, *through modesty*, would have hindered him, and said, I have need to be baptized by Thee, and dost thou come to me? And Jesus replying said unto him, Permit it now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he permitted him. And after Jesus was baptized, as soon as he ascended out of the water, behold the heavens were opened unto him as he was *looking up and praying*; and he saw the Spirit of God, in a corporeal form, descending like a dove, and coming upon him†.—And behold a voice came out of heaven, which said, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased."

And Jesus when beginning [his ministry] was about thirty years old. *The age at which the priests used to begin their ministrations in the temple.* Numb. iv. 7—47.

REFLECTIONS.

Let our Lord's submitting himself to baptism teach us a holy exactness and care in the observance of those positive institutions, which owe their obligation merely to a Divine command; for thus it also becometh us to fulfil all righteousness; lest by breaking one of the least of Christ's commandments, and teaching others to do it, we become unworthy of a part in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. v. 19.) Jesus had no sin to confess or wash away, yet he was baptized; and God owned that ordinance so far as to make it the season of pouring forth the Spirit upon him. And where can we expect this sacred effusion, but in a conscientious and humble attendance on Divine appointments?

Let us remember in how distinguishing a sense Jesus is the Christ, the anointed of God, to whom the Father hath not given the Spirit by measure, but hath poured it out upon him in the most abundant degree. Let us trace the workings of this Spirit in Jesus, not only as a Spirit

* Having received a secret intimation from above that this was the Messiah, being before personally a stranger to Christ.

† That John the Baptist also saw it is plain from John i. 32—34.

‡ *Matt.* "This is," but some copies agree with Mark and Luke.

of miraculous power, but of the richest grace and holiness ; earnestly praying that this holy unction may, from Christ our Head, descend upon our souls ! May his enlivening Spirit kindle its sacred flame there, with such vigour that many waters may not be able to quench it, nor floods of temptation and corruption to drown it.

Behold God's beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased ! As such let us honour and love him ; and as such let our souls acquiesce in him, as in every respect such a Saviour as our wishes might have asked, and our necessities required.

With what amazement should we reflect upon it that the blessed Jesus, though so early ripened for the most extensive services, should live in retirement even till his thirtieth year ! That he deferred his ministry so long, should teach us not to thrust ourselves forward to public stations till we are qualified for them, and plainly discover a divine call : that he deferred it no longer, should be an engagement to us to avoid unnecessary delays, and to give God the prime and vigour of our life.

Our great Master attained not, as it seems, to the conclusion of his thirty-fifth year, if he so much as entered upon it ; yet what glorious achievements did he accomplish within those narrow limits of time ! Happy that servant who with any proportionable zeal dispatches the great business of life ! so much the more happy if his sun go down at noon ; for the space that is taken from the labours of time will be added to the rewards of eternity.

SECTION XIX.

Christ's victory over the temptations of Satan in the wilderness. LUKE iv. 1—13. MATT. iv. 1—11. MARK i 12, 13.

THEN Jesus being full of the holy Spirit returned from Jordan, and immediately was led by the impulse of that Spirit into the wilderness,* that he might be tempted of the devil.—And he was there (with the wild beasts) in the wilderness for forty days, and during that time he was tempted by Satan ; and in all those days he did eat nothing.—And when he had thus fasted forty days and forty nights, at length he was hungry. And the tempter then coming to him in a visible form, said, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves [of bread.] But Jesus answered and said unto him, It is written (*Deut. viii. 3.*) “ Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word proceeding out of the mouth of God.”—Then the devil taketh him to Jerusalem the holy city, and setteth him on one of the battlements of the temple ; and saith unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence ; for it is written (*Psa. xci. 11, 12.*) “ He shall give his angels a charge concerning thee to keep thee ; and they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou shouldest dash thy foot against a stone.” And Jesus answering said unto him, It is also written (*Deut. vi. 16.*) “ Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”—Again the devil taketh him up into a mountain

* He probably intended this as a devout retirement.

exceeding high, and in a moment of time sheweth him, *in a visionary* representation*, all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.—And the devil said unto him, All this power, [and] all these things, will I give thee, and the glory of them (for it is delivered to me, and I give it to whom I please;) if therefore thou wilt fall down and worship me, all shall be thine.

Then Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written (*Deut. vi. 13.*) “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”—And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.—And behold angels came and waited upon him; *furnishing him with supplies, and congratulating so illustrious a victory.*

REFLECTIONS.

Who can read this account without amazement, when he compares the insolence and malice of the prince of darkness with the condescension and grace of the Son of God! What was it that animated and emboldened Satan to undertake such a work? Was it the easy victory he had obtained over the first Adam in Paradise? or was it the remembrance of his own fall, from whence he arrogantly concluded that no heart could stand against the temptations of pride and ambition? Could he, who afterwards proclaimed Christ to be *the Son of the Most High God*, and had perhaps but lately heard him owned as such by a voice from heaven, make any doubt of his Divinity? Or, if he actually believed it, could he expect to vanquish him? We may rather conclude that he did not expect it; but, mad with rage and despair, he was determined at least to worry that *Lamb of God* which he knew he could not devour; and to vex with his hellish suggestions that innocent and holy soul which he knew he could never seduce. Wretched degeneracy! *How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning!* to be thus eagerly driving on thine own repulse and disgrace.

But on the other hand, how highly are we obliged to our great deliverer, who hath brought forth *meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong?* Who can sufficiently adore thy condescension, O blessed Jesus! who wouldst permit thyself to be thus assaulted, and led from place to place by an infernal spirit, whom thou couldst in a moment have remanded back to hell, to be bound in chains of darkness and overwhelmed with flaming ruin!—The apostle tells us why he permitted this: it was that, *having himself suffered, being tempted, he might, by this experience that he had of Satan's subtilty, and of the strength of his temptations, contract an additional tenderness, and be the more inclined, as well as better able, to succour us when we are tempted.* Let this embolden us to *come unto the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need.*

Let us remember and imitate the conduct of the great *Captain of our salvation*; and, like him, let us learn to *resist Satan*, that he may *flee from us*. Like Christ, let us maintain such an humble depend-

* Mr. Hugh Farmer wrote a dissertation to prove that the whole was visionary. *Ec.*

ence on the divine blessing as never to venture out of the way of it, be the necessity ever so urgent : nor let us ever expose ourselves to unnecessary danger, in expectation of extraordinary deliverance. Like him, let us learn to *overcome the world*, and to despise all its pomps and vanities when offered at the price of our innocence.—To furnish us for such a combat, let us take *the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God*. Let us not only make ourselves familiarly acquainted with the words of scripture, but let us study to enter into the true design and meaning of it ; that so, if Satan should attempt to draw his artillery from thence, we may be able to guard against that most dangerous stratagem, and to answer perverted passages of holy writ by others more justly applied.

Once more ; when the suggestions of Satan grow most horrible, let us not conclude that we are utterly abandoned by God, because we are proved by such a trial ; since Christ himself was tempted even to worship the infernal tyrant. But in such cases let us resolutely repel the solicitation, rather than parley with it, and say, in imitation of our Lord's example, and with a dependence on his grace, *Get thee from behind me, Satan*. If our conflict be thus maintained, the struggle will ere long be over ; and angels, who are now the spectators of the combat, will at length congratulate our victory.

SECTION XX.

John the Baptist examined by the great men among the Jews. JOHN I.
19—28.

19 **A**ND this is the *further* testimony of John when *the Sanhedrim*
or *grand council* of the Jews at Jerusalem sent priests and
20 Levites to inquire of him, *saying*, Who art thou ? And he acknowledged, and did not deny *or disguise his real character*, but
21 protested, I am not the Messiah. And they further asked him, What then ?—Art thou Elijah ?—And he said, I am not. Art thou a prophet, *raised from the dead* ? And he answered, No.
22 They said unto him therefore, Who art thou ? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What dost thou say concerning
23 thyself ? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness,
24 Make the way of the Lord straight, as Isaiah the prophet said. Now
25 the messengers were of *the sect* of the Pharisees ; and they asked him and said unto him, Why then dost thou baptize ? since thou
26 art neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor a prophet ? John answered them saying, I baptize you with water, but there is one *that*
27 has stood in the midst of you, whom you know not : this is he that cometh after me who is preferred before me, of whom I am
28 not worthy *even* to untie* the string of his shoe.—These things passed on the other side Jordan, at Bethabarah, *or the house of passage†*, where John was now baptizing.

* This explanation which follows the Dr.'s translation seems better to be substituted for it.

† Near that part of the river which was dried up for the Israelites to pass over into Canaan. Josh. iii. 16. Jud. xii. 6.

REFLECTIONS.

How remarkably were the words of our blessed Redeemer fulfilled in John, *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted!*—He declined assuming the name of any of the servants of God among the prophets; and yet our Lord bore testimony to him as of a higher rank than any of the prophets, than whom there was *none greater among those that had, in a natural way, been born of women.* Did John, this great and illustrious saint, speak of himself as *unworthy to untie even the sandals of Christ*; what reverence then do we owe him? and what reason have we to admire his condescension, that he should honour us, who are so much more unworthy, with the title of his servants?

Let not any, the most distinguished of that happy number, wonder if they be unknown by the world, and perhaps too slighted and despised; since it appears that even Jesus himself, not only at his first appearance stood unknown among the Jews, but afterwards was rejected by them, when his claim was solemnly entered, and his miracles most publicly wrought.

Vain, and worse than vain, was this message and inquiry which, when answered, was so soon overlooked and forgot. May divine grace teach us to inquire as those that are in earnest in our search! and then shall we know to saving purposes, if we thus follow on to know the Lord.

SECTION XXI.

John's repeated testimony to Jesus, as the Lamb of God, the occasion of introducing some of his disciples to him. JOHN I. 29—42.

29 **T**HE next day, John seeth Jesus coming towards him, and
 30 says to them that were near him, Behold the Lamb of God:
 31 which taketh away* the sin of the world! This is he of whom I
 32 said, After me there comes a man who is preferred before me, for
 33 he existed before me. And I did not *personally* know him; yet
 34 for this I came baptizing with water, that he might be made man-
 35 ifest to Israel. And John proceeded, and bore testimony to him,
 36 saying, I saw the Spirit descending like a dove from heaven, and
 it abode upon him. And I did not *personally* know him†: but he
 that sent me to baptize with water, He said unto me, Upon whom
 thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining upon him,
 this is he that baptizeth with the holy Spirit. And I saw this sign,
 and have testified that this is the Son of God.

35 Again on the next day, John was standing, and two of his dis-
 36 ciples‡ with him; and looking steadfastly on Jesus as he was walk-

* By expiation; the only sense in which, as Mr. Tomkins well observes, a Lamb can be said to take away sin.

† Though nearly related, Providence so ordered it that they were not brought up in any intimacy with each other; which, if they had been, might have rendered John's testimony to Christ suspected.

‡ Andrew was one of them, v. 40. and probably John the other; who frequently conceals his name.

37 ing, he says *to them*, Behold the Lamb of God! And when the
 38 two disciples heard him speak, they followed Jesus. And Jesus
 turning back, and seeing them following [him] says to them,
 What do you seek? They said to him, Rabbi (which being trans-
 39 lated *from the Syriac* is, master) where dost thou dwell? He says
 unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt,
 and continued with him *the remainder of that day*, it being then
 about the tenth hour; *or four in the afternoon*.
 40 Now Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two
 41 that heard John [speak of Jesus] and followed him. *And he was*
ready to impart the joyful news to others. He first findeth his own
 brother Simon, and tells him, *with joy*, We have found the Mes-
 siah (which being interpreted is the Christ, *or the anointed one*.)
 42 And he brought him to Jesus. And Jesus, looking steadfastly
 upon him, said, Thou shalt be called Cephas, which signifies a
 rock, *as he was to be one of the great foundations of the church*.

REFLECTIONS.

Let our faith daily behold Jesus under the character of the Lamb
 of God, a Lamb indeed *without blemish and without spot*; by whose
 precious blood we are redeemed, as by an infinitely more valuable
 ransom than *silver and gold*. As such let us humbly apply to him to
take away our sins, and rejoice that (as the apostle John elsewhere
 expresses it) *he is the propitiation, not for our sins only, but also for the*
sins of the whole world; all ages and nations being interested in the
 benefit of his atonement. Let us consider him as anointed by the
 holy Spirit, and as baptizing his church with it; and learn, after the
 example of John the Baptist, to bear our testimony to him again
 and again, with continued steadiness and growing zeal.

Our satisfaction in him as the great and only Saviour will surely
 grow in proportion to our acquaintance with him. If divine grace
 hath discovered him to us, and taught us to repose the confidence
 of our souls upon him, let us, like Andrew in the passage before us,
 be concerned to make him known to others; and especially to lead
 our nearest relatives and our most intimate friends into that acquaint-
 ance with him, which is so absolutely necessary to their eternal hap-
 piness!

Let the condescending readiness with which our blessed Redeem-
 er accepted and even invited the visit of these two disciples, engage
 every preacher of righteousness most willingly to give his private as
 well as his public labours, and his time (valuable as that treasure is) to
 the service of those who are seriously affected with the concerns of
 their souls, and are inquiring after the way to salvation. We are suf-
 ficiently honoured if, by any means, and by all, we may be instrumen-
 tal in promoting that cause which employed the daily labours of God's
 incarnate Son, and at length cost him his very blood!

SECTION XXII.

The calling of Philip, and the interview of Christ with Nathaniel.

JOHN i. 43—51.

- 43 **T**HE next day Jesus determined to depart from thence to Galilee, and *there* he findeth Philip, and says unto him, Follow
 44 me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.
 45 And Philip findeth Nathaniel, and says unto him, We have found him whom Moses in the law and the prophets have described,
 46 [even] Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth. And Nathaniel said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth*? Philip says unto him, Come and see.
 47 Jesus saw Nathaniel coming towards him, and says concerning him, Behold one [that is] truly an Israelite,† in whom there is no
 48 deceit.‡ Nathaniel says to him, Whence dost thou know me? Jesus replied and said unto him, Before Philip called thee, I saw thee when thou wast under the fig-tree, and *observed what passed in that*
 49 *retirement.* Nathaniel says to him, Rabbi, *from this one circumstance I am convinced that* thou art the Son of God, the king of
 50 Israel. Jesus replied and said unto him, Dost thou believe because I told thee *that* I saw thee under the fig-tree? Thou shalt
 51 see greater things than these. And he says unto him, Verily verily I say unto you, from this time you shall see *such a train of* miracles that it shall seem as if heaven was opened, and the angels of God were ascending and descending [to wait] upon the Son of man.

REFLECTIONS.

How cautiously should we guard against popular prejudices, which possessed so honest a heart as that of Nathaniel, and led him to suspect that the blessed Jesus himself was an impostor, and that no good could be expected from him because he had been brought up at Nazareth! But his integrity prevailed over that foolish bias, and laid him open to the conviction of evidence, which a candid inquirer will always be glad to admit, even when it brings the most unexpected discovery. How amiable is the character here given of Nathaniel! An Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile! May the attainment of so excellent a character, and a resemblance to him in it, be the daily aim and emulation of all who have the honour to be called into the Israel of God!

A constant intercourse with God in secret devotion will be a happy expression of one branch of this sincerity, and an effectual means of promoting the rest. Let it therefore be our care that the eye of him that seeth in secret may often behold us in religious retirement, pour-

* A place so infamous that the Galileans themselves had an opinion of it as worse than the rest of their country.

† Rev. iii. 9. John viii. 39. Perhaps the common translation is preferable. "An Israelite indeed."

‡ Like Jacob, *Gen.* xxv. 27.

ing out our souls before God, and humbly consecrating them to his service. The day will come when those scenes of duty which were most cautiously concealed shall be commemorated with public honour; and when he who now discerns them, and is a constant witness to the most private exercises of the closet, will reward them openly.

Happy were those who saw the miracles performed by the Son of man while he was here on earth! and happy those favourite spirits of heaven which were ascending and descending as ministers of his to do his pleasure! But in some degree yet happier are they who, having not seen, have believed. *John* xx. 29. As their faith is peculiarly acceptable, it shall ere long be turned into sight. They shall behold much greater things than ever were seen below, and more extraordinary manifestations of his glory than they can now conceive; and, being brought with all his people to surround his throne, shall join in those nobler services which attendant angels render him above.

SECTION XXIII.

*Christ at a marriage feast at Cana changes water into wine. JOHN II.
1—11.*

NOW the third day after Christ's discourse with Nathaniel there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus and his disciples were invited to the marriage. And when the wine fell short, the mother of Jesus (*expecting a miracle*) says unto him, They have no wine. Jesus says to her, O woman,* what hast thou to do with me? *to direct me how and when my miracles are to be wrought?* My time is not yet come.† His mother says unto the servants, Whatever he shall order you, do it.

Now there were set there six water-pots of stone, according to the Jewish custom of purifying, containing each of them two or three measures.‡ Jesus says to them, Fill up those jars with water. And they filled them to the brim. And *having transformed the water into wine*, he says to them, Now draw some of it out, and carry it to the president of the feast. And they carried it to him.

Now when the president of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it came (though the servants that drew the water knew) he calls for the bridegroom, and says unto him, Every man first sets out the good wine, and when they have drank plentifully, then that which is worse; [but] thou hast kept the good wine until now.—This beginning of his public miracles Jesus wrought in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory, and his disciples believed on him, *more steadfastly than before.*

* There was no rudeness in this address, for it was anciently used to ladies of the highest rank.

† Or, Is not my time yet come? q. d. that I should be left to govern my own actions. *Greg. Naz.* [This best connects with the following words of Mary] Ed.

‡ It is hardly possible to determine the exact contents of these vessels.

REFLECTIONS.

We have here the first of Christ's public miracles, which we find was not wrought till about his thirtieth year. How much sooner could he have glorified himself, and amazed the world by the display of his Divine power? But he waited his Father's call, and the delay added at length to the lustre of his works.

It was performed to grace a nuptial solemnity: and who doth not see that it was in effect a testimony borne to the honour and purity of that happy state on which so much of the comfort of the present generation, and the existence of the future, regularly depends? How happy were these guests while Jesus was among them! and how condescending did he appear in making one on the occasion! His social and obliging temper should sweeten ours, and be a lesson to his followers that they avoid every thing sour and morose, and do not censure others for innocent liberties at proper seasons of festivity and joy.

If his mother met with so just a rebuke for attempting to direct his administrations in the days of his flesh, how absurd is it for any to address her as if she had a right to command him on the throne of his glory? And how indecent for us to direct his supreme wisdom as to the time and manner in which he shall appear for us in any of the exigencies of life. Her submission and faith manifested on this occasion are truly amiable: and with this we have surely reason to admire the benignity and generosity of Christ in this miracle before us; who consulted the pleasure and entertainment as well as the necessity of his followers; and by this abundant supply amply repaid any extraordinary expense which he might have occasioned to the family.

How easily could he, who thus turned water into wine, have transformed every entertainment of a common table into the greatest delicacies, and have regaled himself daily with royal dainties? But, far superior to such animal gratifications, he chose the severities of a much plainer life. Blessed Jesus! who can say whether thou art greater in what thou didst, or in what thou didst not do? May none of us thy followers be too intent on indulging our taste, or any of our other senses; but, pursuing those intellectual and devotional pleasures which were thy meat and thy drink on earth, may we wait for that good wine which thou reservest for thy people to the last, and for those richer dainties with which thou wilt feast those who shall drink it with thee in thy Father's kingdom! (Matt. xxvi. 29.)

SECTION XXIV.

Jesus keeps the passover at Jerusalem and clears the temple. JOHN II. 12, &c.

12 **A**FTER Jesus had attended this marriage, he and his mother,
 13 and his brethren, and his disciples, went down to Capernaum,
 14 and they continued there not many days. And the passover of
 the Jews drew near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And he
 found in the outer court of the temple those that sold oxen and

- sheep and doves,* and money-changers† sitting at their tables.
- 15 And having made a whip of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the money of the exchangers, and overturned the tables. And he said to them that sold doves, Take these things away from hence,
- 16 and do not make my Father's house an house of traffic. And his disciples remembered that it was written of David, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."
- 17 The Jews therefore (*whose grand council sat in a chamber of the temple*) answered and said unto him, What sign dost thou shew us, seeing that thou dost these things, to prove thy divine commission? Jesus answered and said unto them, Demolish this temple, and I will raise it up again in three days. The Jews then said, This temple hath been six and forty years building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his own body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this to them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.
- 18 Now when he was at the passover in Jerusalem on the feast-day, many, seeing the miracles which he wrought, believed in him.
- 19 But Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew them all, and had no need that any one should testify of any man, for he knew what was in man; and consequently that there was no room for him to expect them to be faithful to him.

REFLECTIONS.

How powerful is the love of this world, when it could engage even the priests and the Pharisees to let out the temple itself for a marketplace! though a professed zeal for the honour of it made so great a part of the righteousness of which they boasted before God. But our Lord beheld the scene with just indignation; as that displeasure is indeed just which arises from a sense of dishonour done to God, and contempt poured on the institutions of his worship. Happy shall we be in the warmest emotions of zeal which do not transport us beyond the rules of prudence and love, and make us forget those stations in life which require the same principles to shew themselves in widely different effects!

Methinks the state of the temple, when these traders had erected their seats and their stalls in it, and turned the courts of God's house into a market, is too just an emblem of the state of our hearts, when we appear in the sanctuary distracted with worldly cares to the neglect of that one thing needful which then demands our most attentive regards. Would to God that in this sense *our Father's house* were not often made a *house of merchandise*! Let us pray that Jesus, by his good Spirit, would assert it to himself, and drive out those intruders

* Under a pretence of accommodating the worshippers with sacrifices. Josephus says, no less than 256,500 victims were offered at one passover.

† Persons who changed foreign coin into current, and larger pieces into small.

which break in upon our truest enjoyments, in proportion to that degree in which they intrench on our devotion !

After a thousand proofs of his Divine mission, the Jews were wicked and desperate enough, with sacrilegious hands to *destroy the temple of Christ's body* : but let us be thankful for the undoubted evidence we have that, as an everlasting monument of his power and truth, he *raised it again in three days* ! Happy will it be for us if we cordially believe a gospel so gloriously attested ; but most vain will that belief be which doth not penetrate and influence the heart. Let us remember that we have to do with him that formed our nature, and is most intimately acquainted with all its recesses. *He knows what is in man* : may he see nothing in us which shall not be thoroughly agreeable to the profession we make of being his faithful disciples !

To conclude ; let us learn from the caution which Jesus used, not rashly to put ourselves and our usefulness into the power of others ; but to study a wise and happy medium between that universal prejudice and suspicion which, while it wrongs the best and the most worthy characters, would deprive us of all the pleasures of an intimate friendship, and that undistinguishing easiness and openness of temper which might make us the property of every hypocritical pretender to kindness and respect.

SECTION XXV.

Our Lord's conference with Nicodemus on Regeneration. JOHN III.
1—10.

1 **T**HERE was a man of the Pharisees whose name was Nicodemus, a magistrate of the Jews, *who wishing to be informed of Christ's doctrine, made him a visit ; but lest offence should be*
2 *taken, he came to Jesus by night ; and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher from God : for none can do these*
3 *miracles which thou dost unless God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily verily I say unto thee, unless a*
4 *man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus says unto him, How can a man be born when he is old ? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born ?*
5 *Jesus answered, Verily verily I say unto thee, Unless a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of*
6 *God : that which is born of the flesh is only flesh ; and that which*
7 *is born of the Spirit is spirit. Wonder not therefore that I said*
8 *unto thee, You must be born again. The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the sound thereof, yet thou canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth : so it is with every one*
9 *that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto*
10 *him, How can these things be ? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a teacher in Israel, and dost thou not know these things ?*

REFLECTIONS.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear with attention what the blessed Redeemer said on this great occasion. It is surely a matter of

universal concern : for who would not desire to enter into the kingdom of God ? to be an acceptable member of Christ's church now, and an heir of glory beyond the grave ?—But how is this blessing to be expected and secured ? Thus saith the Lord himself, *Unless a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*—Let us remember therefore that it is not enough that a new name be given us, or that a new profession be assumed ; it is not enough that we are descended from the most pious ancestors, that we have been externally devoted to God by the early seal of his covenant, or that we openly have made a solemn and express profession of our own faith and obedience, and have been born of baptismal water in our riper years ! There must be a new nature implanted, a new creation formed, in our souls by the almighty energy of the eternal Spirit, or it had been better for us that we had never been born at all.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and as we all proceed from a corrupt original, we do not more evidently bear the image of the earthly Adam in the infirmities of a mortal body than in the degeneracy of a corrupted mind. Oh, let us earnestly intreat that, being born of the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, we may bear the image of the heavenly ! And to these influences let us with all humility and thankfulness be ready to yield up our souls, as remembering that they are of a free and sovereign nature, like the wind that *bloweth where it will*, and does not stay for the command of the children of men.

Let none of us indulge a vain and useless curiosity with respect to the manner of the Spirit's operations ; or wonder that we meet with some things that are secret and unknown in matters of a spiritual nature, when we see daily there are so many things unknown in the common appearances of the natural world, and indeed so few that we can perfectly understand. May the pride of a falsely pretended reason be subdued to the authority of faith ! And more especially, may such as are teachers in Israel, or who are designed for that important office, take their instructions with all humility from this teacher sent from God ! For it must surely be not only their calamity, but that too of the church in general, if its guides continue ignorant of those sublime and spiritual truths which Christ came down from heaven to reveal, or are so biassed by the carnal reasonings of a depraved mind as to be indisposed and backward to receive them.

SECTION XXVI.

Our Lord opens to Nicodemus the design of his coming, and the necessity of faith in him, JOHN iii. 11—21.

11 **V**ERILY verily I say unto thee, we speak what we know,
 12 and testify that which we have seen, and ye receive not our
 13 testimony. If I have told you earthly things* and ye believe not,
 14 how would you believe if I should tell you heavenly things ?† And

* Things that may be illustrated by earthly objects, [or things transacted here on earth.]

† Heb. vi. 1, 2. Ps. ciii. 11. Isa. lv. 9.

no one has ascended up to heaven to search into the secret counsels of God,* unless he who is descended from heaven, [even] the Son of man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the brazen serpent on a pole in the wilderness, so also must the Son of man be lifted up on a cross, that whoever believeth on him may not perish, but may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believeth on him may not perish but may have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved by him. He that believeth on him shall not be condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. Now this is the great condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his actions should be reproved. But he that practises truth comes to the light, that his actions may be made manifest that they are wrought in God,† agreeably to his nature and will, and in consequence of union of soul with him.

REFLECTIONS.

How happy is it for us that, since none of the children of men ever ascended up into heaven to learn the mysteries of divine knowledge there, the only begotten Son of God has been pleased to come down from thence that he might instruct us! He spake what he knew, and testified what he had seen: Oh, that men were so wise as to receive his testimony, be the discoveries ever so new or the doctrines ever so sublime! Let us with peculiar pleasure attend unto that abstract of the gospel which he exhibited in this profitable and comprehensive discourse with Nicodemus. It presents to our view *Christ and him crucified*. It opens the treasures of divine beneficence and compassion, and shews us the Father of mercies so loving a world, which he might justly have abhorred and destroyed, as to give his only begotten Son to be a ransom for it.

Let us behold him lifted up on the cross as the great attractive to whom all were to be drawn! In him shall we find the divine cure for our souls, infected as they are with the poison of sin, if we behold him not merely with a curious but a believing eye. Whatever our wounds be, if in the exercise of faith we look to him, we shall not die of them; but it is owing to our own obstinacy and impenitence if we yet perish.

He might justly have appeared in a different form, for the condemnation of sinners, rather than their salvation. The Son of God might have come into an apostate world armed with thunderbolts of flaming vengeance, to punish the violation of his Father's law; but his hands are filled with eternal blessings. As we love our own souls, let us apply to him in time for this salvation. Let us dread the ag-

* Deut. xxx. 12. Rom. x. 12. Prov. xxx. 4.

† This discourse appears to have made a deep and lasting impression. See ch. vii. 50. xix. 39.

gravated condemnation of those who, when light is come into the world, prefer darkness to it, and obstinately shut their eyes against it, though it be the dawns of an eternal day.

May integrity and uprightness preserve us ! And, conscious of a real desire to govern ourselves according to the light we have, may we cheerfully lay ourselves in the way of more ; that in the last awful day, when the sentence of Divine wrath shall be executed on all the servants of sin, and their character shall stand disclosed in the most odious colours, ours may shine out beautiful and fair, and the good deeds that we have done, being now wrought in God, may then not only be accepted and applauded, but through the grace of the Redeemer abundantly rewarded by him !

SECTION XXVII.

John's last testimony to Christ, on occasion of a dispute concerning his baptism and that of our Lord's disciples. JOHN iii. 22, &c.

22 **A**FTER these things, Jesus and his disciples came into the
land of Judea, and there he continued with them, and by their
23 ministry* baptized. And John was also baptizing at Enon near
Salim, because there was a great quantity of water there : and
24 they came and were baptized by him ; (for John was not yet thrown
into prison, as he was soon after.)
25 And there was a dispute [between some] of the disciples of John,
and a [certain] Jew† who had been baptized by Christ, about this
26 rite of purifying, or baptism. And they came to John (*solicitous for
his honour*) and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee on
the other side Jordan, to whom thou gavest testimony (*viz. Jesus*)
27 behold he now baptizeth, and all come to him. John replied and
said, *Do not give way to such vain partiality to me, for a man can*
28 *receive nothing unless it be given him from heaven. You your-*
selves bear witness to me, that I said, from the first, that I am not
29 *the Christ ; but that I am sent as a harbinger before him. It is*
the bridegroom that hath the bride ; but the friend of the bride-
groom, who standeth and heareth him express his delight,‡ so far
from envying, he rejoices with great joy on account of the bride-
groom's voice. Therefore this my joy is completed in my Master's
30 *success.* He must increase, but I must decline : he that cometh
31 from above is above all ; he that was of the earth, like me is still of
the earth, and speaketh of the earth ; he who cometh from hea-
32 ven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard that does he
testify : and yet no man receives his testimony : among all that
hear him there are very few who are duly affected with what he de-
33 livers. He who hath indeed received his testimony hath set his

* Ch. iv. 2.

† Many copies, as well as the Syriac version, and the citations of some of the Fathers, determine me to prefer this reading, which gives an easier sense.

‡ Some suppose this alludes to a peculiar ceremony in the Jewish marriages. See Hammond.

34 seal [to it] that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speak-
 eth the words of God, for God giveth not the spirit [to him] by
 35 measure. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things
 36 into his hand. He who believeth on the Son hath eternal life ;
 but he that is disobedient to the Son shall not see life, but the
 wrath of God abideth upon him.

REFLECTIONS.

It is indeed too true that *the spirit which naturally dwelleth in us all lusteth to envy*, and it is far from being a low attainment in religion to look with complacency and thankfulness on the superior abilities and acceptance of others, especially of those who once appeared in an inferior rank. But for the cure of this unreasonable and restless passion, so contrary to the true spirit of the gospel, let us remember that *a man can receive nothing at all except it be given him from heaven*. It is God that makes one man to differ from another ; and surely nothing can be more unreasonable than that, when we ourselves have received all from bounty, *our eye should be evil because he is good*.

If we are indeed the friends of Christ we shall rejoice to see his interest advance, and especially to see souls espoused to him as the great Bridegroom of the church, whoever are the instruments of promoting so happy a work. *Would to God that, in this sense, all the Lord's people were even as the greatest of the prophets, or as the very chief of the apostles !*

But if indeed they were so, yet, like those brightest luminaries of the church, they must in time have their change and their wane. If God does not darken their glories by a sudden eclipse, yet they who are now, like the Baptist, *burning and shining lights*, must like him gradually decrease, while others are increasing about them ; as they, in their turns, grew up amidst the decays of the former generations. Let us know how to set as well as to rise ; and let it comfort our declining days to trace in those that are like to succeed us in our work, the openings of yet greater usefulness. So shall we grow in our meekness for that world where *all the righteous shall shine forth together, as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father*, in a bright resemblance of him with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning.

As the surest means of guiding us to that happy world, let us make it our great care, by receiving the testimony of Christ, to set our seal to the truth of God, engaged in his cause.—With how much pleasure should we do it, and with what joy should we reflect that the Father so loveth the Son that he has not only given him the rich and unmeasurable communication of the Spirit, but has committed also into his hand the reins of government ! Let his faithful servants remember it with joy, and cheerfully commit their concerns to him *who is made head over all things for the benefit of his church*.

And to conclude ; let it engage us to see to the sincerity of our faith in him, and subjection to him ; since it is not a light matter, but *our life*, even the very life of our souls. May God awaken those on whom his wrath now abideth to a sense of their danger ; and may he strengthen in each of our souls that faith which is the pledge of a happy immortality.

SECTION XXVIII.

John the Baptist imprisoned by Herod. LUKE iii. 19, 20. MARK vi. 17—20. MATT. xiv. 3—5.

THUS John prosecuted the design of his appearance : but Herod Antipas the tetrarch of Galilee, being reproved by him on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife (for he had taken her from her husband and married her) and also for all the other evils that Herod had done—added yet this to all [the rest] of his crimes, that he shut up John in prison. For Herod himself, of his own resentment, sent officers and seized John, and bound him and put him in prison ; for John had told Herod to his face, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. And for this Herodias also, more furiously incensed, hung upon him*, and would have put him to death, but she could not immediately compass that design : for Herod still revered John in his heart, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man ; and, calling him to frequent audiences, he heard him with attention and pleasure, and did many things according to his exhortations. And when he would have consented to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they looked upon him as a prophet.

REFLECTIONS.

What dangerous things are grandeur and power, if divine grace does not secure the hearts of those who possess them ! How unhappy are they whose fatal prerogative it is to be able to oppress with impunity, and to render it hazardous even to reprove them ! John well deserved the veneration and esteem of Herod when he thus took the freedom to perform this dangerous office of friendship, and to manifest a fidelity so seldom to be found in courts, and indeed so often wanting elsewhere. A wise prince would have courted his friendship, and sought his advice ; but he is at length rewarded with imprisonment and death. This good man was taken from his work, and laid aside in the midst of his days and his usefulness ; but he calmly acquiesced in the disposals of Providence, and no doubt carried along with him to his prison incomparably more happiness than his persecutors could find on the throne.

In this confinement the prophet was not forgotten ; but as if Herod had studied to increase his own torment, he must be sent for again and again to discourse before him. That he revered a man of such profound integrity none can wonder : but while he would not be entirely reformed by his remonstrances, that he should hear him with pleasure, and do many things, is very surprising. Delusive pleasure ! unprofitable reformation ! while, whatsoever instances he gave of his regarding him, Herodias was yet retained. May divine grace preserve us from such fatal partiality ! since, did we keep the whole law, and offend allowedly but in one point, we should become guilty of all.

* The phrase seems an allusion to a dog's holding down his prey with his teeth.

We cannot wonder if a reformation thus insincere and partial was but short lived, and was followed at length by a grosser apostacy. *More bitter than death is the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands bands.* To what may not the artifices of such an abandoned creature work up the wretch that is entangled with her charms ! Such was the influence of Herodias over him, that at her instigation Herod is prevailed upon to seek the death of that righteous and holy man, whose virtues he revered, and whose preaching he had attended with pleasure. But the fear of the people restrained him, though he was destitute of the fear of God, and had not any generous regard to men. Thus does God govern the world, and thus does he protect his church, by often making it the interest even of the worst of men to forbear those injuries and cruelties which the malignity of their natures might otherwise dictate. Let us courageously *commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing*, as firmly believing that, whatever hazards we may be exposed to, *the wrath of man shall on the whole be found to praise him, and the remainder of that wrath shall be restrained !*

SECTION XXIX.

Christ's conference with a woman of Samaria. JOHN IV. 1—26.

- 1 **W**HEN therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard *with great concern* that Jesus made and baptized
- 2 more disciples than John ; (though Jesus himself did not baptize *with his own hands*, but his disciples *did it in his name*) to avoid their
- 3 *envy and their curiosity*, he left Judea, and departed again into
- 4 Galilee. Now, he was obliged to go through Samaria*. He
- 5 cometh therefore to a city of Samaria, called Sichar, *originally Sichen*, near that piece of ground which Jacob gave to Joseph his
- 6 beloved Son†. And there was Jacob's well. Now Jesus, being wearied with his journey, sat down immediately by the well ;
- 7 [and] it was about the sixth hour, or high noon.
- 8 *At this juncture* there comes a woman of Samaria to draw water.
- 9 Jesus says unto her, Give me [some water] to drink ; for his dis-
- 10 ciples were gone to the city to buy food. Then says the woman of Samaria to him, How is it that thou who art a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria ? for the Jews have no friend-
- 11 ly intercourse with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou hadst known the gift of God, and who it is that says un-
- 12 to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest surely have asked him, and he would have given thee living water.
- 13 The woman (*who understood him only of common water*) says to him, Sir, thou hast no bucket, and the well is very deep ; whence
- 14 hast thou then this living water ? Art thou greater than our father Jacob who gave us this well, and drank of it himself, with his chil-
- 15 dren and his cattle ? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whoever

* Unless he had taken a wide circuit.

† Gen. xxxiii. 19. xlviii. 22. Josh. xxiv. 32.

- 14 drinketh of this water will thirst again: But he that drinketh of the water which I shall give him, will never thirst; but the water which I shall give him will be in him a fountain of water springing up to everlasting life.
- 15 The woman (*still ignorant of his spiritual meaning*) says unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come hither to draw. Jesus says unto her, Go call thy husband and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus says to her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou hast now, is not thy husband: this thou hast spoken truly.
- 19 The woman says to him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet*. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain; whereas you say that at Jerusalem is the place where we ought to worship. Jesus says to her, Woman, believe me, The hour is coming when neither on this mountain, nor at Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father *as you now do*. You worship you know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is from the Jews. Nevertheless the hour approaches, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, ought to worship in spirit and in truth.
- 25 The woman saith unto him, I know that the Messiah, who is called Christ, is coming, [and] when he is come, he will teach us all things. Jesus *directly* tells her, I that am speaking to thee, am HE.

REFLECTIONS.

Condescending and compassionate Redeemer! who would thus graciously converse with a Samaritan, with a woman of an infamous reputation too, from whom, on various accounts, a haughty Pharisee would have turned away in proud disdain! and could forget his thirst, pressing as that appetite is, that he might instruct and lead her to the waters of life! Gracious gift of God to the children of men! how noble and how lasting a delight does it administer! Let it be our language, *Lord, evermore give us this living water!* Oh, pour out this enlivening spirit on us, which alone can allay the thirst of our souls, and give us that lasting satisfaction which we in vain would seek from these *broken cisterns*, from these precarious streams; till at length the fountain springs up in Paradise, and flows on to life everlasting!

May this good Spirit anticipate those immortal delights to our souls, by leading us into that spirituality of worship which the nature of God demands, and which the gospel dispensation is so eminently calculated to promote! Let it be inscribed on our hearts that *God is a Spirit*; and let it teach us *to worship him in spirit, and in truth*. Such worshippers the Father seeks; such may he ever find in us! May all intemperate zeal for matters of doubtful disputation, all sentiments of bigotry and severity against our brethren, be happily swal-

* q.d. Inform me therefore concerning the question which divides the Jews and Samaritans.

lowed up in this infinitely greater concern ! and while others contend about places and forms of worship, may we pour out our hearts before him, and feel the love of God and man shed abroad in them by his Spirit given unto us !

SECTION XXX.

Christ's discourse with his disciples at Jacob's well ; his visit to the Samaritans. JOHN IV. 27—42.

27 **A**ND upon this, his disciples came *back* (*who were gone to buy food*) and wondered that he was talking *thus* with the woman ; yet no one *of them* said, What dost thou seek, or why dost thou talk with her ? Then the woman left her water pot, and went away to the city, and says to the men *of her acquaintance*, Come see a man who has told me all that ever I did : is not this the Messiah ? They therefore went out of the city, and came to him.

31 In the mean time the disciples entreated him *to refresh himself*, saying, Rabbi, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat that ye know not of. The disciples therefore said one to another, *Has any one brought him [any food] to eat ?* Jesus says to them, My food is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.—Do not you say, that there are yet four months, and harvest cometh ? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes and survey the fields ; for they are already white unto the harvest. And he that reaps receiveth wages, and gathers in the fruit unto eternal life : so that both he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together. For herein is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that on which you have not laboured : others have laboured, and you are entered into their labour.

39 Now many of the Samaritans from that city believed on him by reason of that saying of the woman who testified, He told me all that ever I did. When therefore the Samaritans were come to him, they entreated him to tarry with them ; and he continued there two days. And many more believed on account of his own discourse ; and said to the woman, Now we believe, not on account of what thou hast spoken ; for we ourselves have heard him, and know that this is really the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us behold with pleasure the glorious example of our blessed Redeemer, and learn to imitate his zeal. It was his *meat and drink* to pursue his Father's work, to glorify God, and to do good to souls : and ought it not to be ours ? Let us bless God for every opportunity of applying to it, and every field of service which Providence opens to us. Let gospel ministers especially be thankful for all that hath been done to introduce their services, not only by the ministrations of the prophets under the Old Testament, but by the apostles also under

the New, and by succeeding servants of Christ in every age of the church. In this sense, with regard to us, is that proverb true, *One soweth and another reapeth*. We have entered into the labours of others: may others in time enter into ours! May the work be delivered over from one faithful hand to another, and be carried on by each with growing zeal and success! Blessed time, when all the workmen shall meet and join their songs; and each of the souls gathered into eternal life shall be, to all concerned in their conversion or edification, an ornament of glory and a source of pleasure!

Surely, if we know Christ ourselves, we shall, like this woman of Samaria, be solicitous to communicate the knowledge to others, and shall sometimes forget our little worldly interests to attend to this vastly superior care. May we believe in him, not merely on the report and testimony of others, but on our own experience; that, having *tasted that the Lord is gracious*, we may bear a more lively and effectual testimony to him! Let us watchfully observe the leadings of providence, and whatever our own schemes may have been, let us still adjust our conduct by the intimations of present duty; and, especially where we have reason to believe that God is by his Spirit beginning to work on men's hearts, let us be ambitious of being workers together with him. A word spoken in such a season is remarkably good, and it is a great part of Christian and ministerial prudence to observe and improve those tender times.

SECTION XXXI.

Christ comes into Galilee, and cures a nobleman's son in Capernaum.

MARK i. 14, 15. MATT. iv. 12. JOHN iv. 43, &c.

NOW after John was cast into prison, and Jesus had heard [of it,] he withdrew [and] came into Galilee, preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is near; repent, and believe the gospel.

And (*having been prevailed upon to stop at Sichar in his way*) after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee; for Jesus himself testified, that a prophet has no honour in his own country. When therefore he came into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem during the feast (for they also came to the feast.) Jesus, therefore, came again to Cana of Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was ill at Capernaum; [Who] when he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, went to him and entreated him that he would come down, and cure his son, for he was just ready to die. Jesus said therefore unto him, unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe. The nobleman says to him, Sir, *I beseech thee* come down before my child die. Jesus says to him, *Go thy way*, thy son is recovered. And the man believed the word that Jesus spoke unto him, and went away.

Now as he was going down to Capernaum, his servants met him and told [him] saying, Thy son is recovered. Therefore, he inquired

of them the hour when he began to mend : and they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. The father therefore knew that it was at the very hour in which Jesus said to him, Thy son is recovered : and he and his whole family believed. This is again the second miracle which Jesus performed at *Cana*, when he came out of Judea into Galilee.

REFLECTIONS.

How unreasonable are the passions and prejudices of mankind, and this in particular, that a prophet should have no honour in his own country ! One would have imagined that Jesus at least, free as he was from all the follies of childhood and youth, should have been an exception ; nay, indeed, that he should have been peculiarly honoured there, where his early wisdom and piety could not but be observed. Our Lord however intended them a visit, even at Nazareth ; and it is the duty of his ministers to bear their testimony, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. Yet should they learn of their great Master to study as much as they can to obviate those prejudices which might prevent their usefulness, and should use the most prudent and gentle methods to vanquish them.

Such was this beneficial miracle of our Lord ; which may afford us many particulars worthy of our notice. With what affection and zeal does this tender parent apply to Christ on the sickness of his child ! Let us not be less importunate when soliciting spiritual blessings in behalf of our dear offspring ; and so much the rather as their lives are so precarious, and we know not how soon these lovely flowers may be cut down, and all further petitions for them be for ever superseded. Our Lord, while at a distance from the patient, wrought and perfected the cure. And has he not still the same divine power, though he does not exert it in the same miraculous way ? Let not his bodily absence abate our faith, while praying for others or for ourselves.

Salvation now came to this house, and blessings infinitely more valuable than noble blood, or ample possessions, or royal favour, or recovered health could give ; for the cure wrought on the body of one was a means of producing faith in the hearts of all. Blessed Jesus ! thy power was no less employed in the latter than in the former. Oh, may that power work in such a manner on our souls as that we all may be disposed cordially to receive thee, and cheerfully to venture our eternal all upon thee ! May we and our houses concur in so wise and happy a resolution ; and not insisting upon evidence beyond what thy gracious wisdom has thought fit to give us, may we candidly receive the light we have, and faithfully improve it so as to be at length entitled to the *blessedness* of those *who have not seen and yet have believed* !

SECTION XXXII.

Christ preaching at Nazareth is at first admired, but immediately after rejected. LUKE iv. 14—30.

- 14 **A**ND Jesus returned into Galilee, in the power of the Spirit ;
 15 and his repown went through all the neighbouring region.
 16 And he taught in their synagogues with universal applause. And
 17 he came to Nazareth, where he was educated ; and, according to
 18 his custom, he entered into the synagogue on the sabbath-day ;
 19 and (*being desired by the ruler*) stood up to read *the scriptures*.*
 20 And the book of Isaiah the prophet was delivered to him, and
 21 unrolling the book, he found that place of it (*Isa. lxi. 1, 2, 3.*)
 22 where it was written to *this effect* : “ The Spirit of the Lord is
 23 upon me, for the purpose to which he hath anointed me ; [for]
 24 he hath sent me to preach good news to the poor, to heal those
 25 whose hearts are broken, to proclaim dismissal to captives, even
 26 the recovery of sight to them that are blind *in prison*,† [and] to set
 27 those at liberty who are bruised *with fetters* : to proclaim that wel-
 28 come year of the Lord (*the year of jubilee.*”) And having rolled
 29 up the book,‡ he delivered it to the servant, and sat down ; and
 30 the eyes of all in the synagogue were attentively fixed upon him.
 31 And he began to say to them, To-day this scripture is fulfilled in
 32 your hearing.
 33 And they all bore testimony to him, and were astonished at
 34 those graceful words which proceeded out of his mouth, saying, is
 35 not this the son of Joseph ?
 36 And he said to them, You will undoubtedly say to me that pro-
 37 verb, Physician, cure thyself ; [and] do also here, in thine own
 38 country, those works which, we have heard, were done at Caper-
 39 naum. But he *further* said, Verily I say unto you, that no pro-
 40 phet is acceptable in his own country. But I tell you as a truth,
 41 There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when
 42 the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, so that
 43 a great famine prevailed in all the land. And *yet* Elijah was
 44 sent to none of them, but to a widow woman at Sarepta, [a city] of
 45 the *Gentiles*, of Sidon. And there were also many lepers in Israel
 46 in the time of Elisha the prophet ; yet none of them was clean-
 47 sed, but Naaman the Syrian. And all that were in the synagogue,
 48 when they heard these things, were filled with fury : and rising
 49 up *at once*, they cast him out of the city, and brought him to the
 50 very brow of the mountain on which their city was built, that they
 51 might cast him down headlong. But he *miraculously* passed
 52 through the midst of them, and went away.

* Which made a constant part of their worship (*Acts xv. 31.*) and any man of gravity and reputation, at the request of the ruler, might officiate. *Comp. Acts xiii. 15.*

† Perhaps an allusion to the inhuman custom in Eastern countries of putting out the eyes of prisoners.

‡ Which was a long scroll of parchment, rolled upon two sticks.

REFLECTIONS.

We see that it was the custom of our blessed Saviour to frequent the synagogues every sabbath-day : how well therefore does it become his servants to be constant in their attendance on public ordinances, especially since those of the gospel are in many respects so much nobler than any which the Mosaic institution would admit. In the synagogues the scriptures were constantly read ; and it is matter of pleasing reflection that, in all ages of the Christian church, the reading them hath usually been made a part of the service in most of its solemn assemblies. Let it still be so with us for this reason, among others, that so glorious a testimony to the genuineness of scripture may not be impaired in our hands, but transmitted to those that shall arise after us.

And surely the Old Testament, as well as the New, deserves our attentive perusal ; in which, if we are not strangely negligent, or strangely prejudiced, we must often meet with remarkable prophecies of Christ shining with a pleasing lustre, like *lights in a dark place*. How amiable a view of him is given in that which he now opened ! Let us seriously attend to it. It is a moving representation that is here made of the deplorable state in which the gospel finds us ! The helpless prisoners of divine justice, the wretched captives of Satan, stripped and wounded, the eyes of our understanding blinded, and the powers of our souls enfeebled, and as it were, bruised with those chains which prejudice and vice have fastened upon them ! But in these miserable circumstances Jesus appears to *open the doors of our prison*, to strike off our fetters, and even to restore our sight. He comes to enrich our impoverished souls, and to preach a far better jubilee than Moses could proclaim ; the free forgiveness of all our sins, and the recovery of an inheritance of eternal glory. Surely it should be to us a most acceptable time. *Blessed are the people that know this joyful sound ; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance !* In some sense this instructive and comfortable scripture is *this day fulfilled in our ears* likewise. Let us also bear our testimony to the gracious words of this welcome messenger whom God hath anointed for such happy purposes !

One would have imagined that while the eyes of his auditors were fixed upon him, their souls should have drank in his doctrine as the thirsty earth sucks up the rain, and that every heart should have been open to embrace him. But, O blessed Jesus, while thou art preaching these glad tidings of great joy, what a return dost thou find ! Thou art ungratefully rejected, thou art impiously assaulted ; and had their rage and malice been able to prevail, the joyful sound would have died into empty air as soon as it began, and this thy first sermon at Nazareth had been thy last. Thus disdainfully art thou still rejected by multitudes, who still bear the same message echoing from thy word. And is there not a malignity in the hearts of sinners which might lead those of our own days to the outrageous wickedness of these Nazarenes, were their opportunities the same, rather than they would bow their stubborn hearts to the obedience of faith ? But while they are *crucifying thee afresh* by their sins, and *fasting thee*.

to open shame, may we honour thee as the Son of God, the Saviour of men ; and labour by the ardour of our love and the steadiness of our obedience, in some measure to balance the ingratitude of those who, while they are opposing thee, are destroying themselves !

SECTION XXXIII.

Christ goes to Capernaum, and teaches in the synagogue there with great acceptance ; and calls Peter, Andrew, James, and John. MATT. iv. 13—22. LUKE iv. 31, 32. MARK i. 16—20.

AND leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt at Capernaum, a city of Galilee, that lay on the sea-coast, in the confines of Zebulon and Naphtali ; that what was said by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled. *Speaking of the land of Zebulon, and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, about Jordan, called Galilee of the Gentiles, he says,* “ The people that sat in darkness saw a great light ; and to them that sat in the region and shadow of death light has sprung up.” From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And he was teaching them *thus* on the sabbath-days ; and they were struck with his doctrine ; for his word was with authority.

And as Jesus was walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brethren, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea ; for they were fishers. And Jesus said to them, Come after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And they immediately forsook their nets and followed him. And going a little way from thence he saw two other brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother ; and they were in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. And he immediately called them ; and they presently left their father Zebedee with the hired servants in the ship, and went after him.

REFLECTIONS.

Such was the zeal and courage of our blessed Redeemer, that he no sooner had been persecuted and assaulted at Nazareth, but he went and preached in the synagogue at Capernaum. Thus may all the opposition that we meet with in the course of our duty, animate, rather than overbear, our resolution in performing it !

How happy was the land of Zebulon and Naphtali in the visits of such a guest ! And may we not add too, how happy is our own land in being visited by the everlasting gospel, which is now much more clearly discovered to us than it was to these coasts while Christ began to open his ministry among their inhabitants. In us is this prophecy of Isaiah eminently fulfilled : We but a few ages ago *sat in darkness* ; and behold we *see a great light*. Our country, amidst all the advantages of its soil and situation, was, in a spiritual sense, *the region of the shadow of death* ; but the *Sun of Righteousness* has risen upon us, nor do we only behold his rising beams, but his meridian lustre. May we not be so ungrateful as obstinately to shut our eyes against it, lest the val-

ity of vision, and *Emanuel's land*, should on the whole prove to us the land of destruction, and the valley of death itself!

That this may never be our case, let us diligently attend to this Divine Teacher, who speaks with such authority, and whose words are so weighty and powerful. May we feel the energy and authority of them! May they call us off from every undue attachment to the business or the pleasures of life! And if he should ever see fit to try us, as he did these his servants, with a command to forsake our nearest relations, and our earthly all, for his service, let us do it with pleasure; remembering on the one hand, that *he who loves father or mother, wife or children, houses or lands, more than Christ, is not worthy of him*; and on the other hand, that *he who abandons these engagements for his sake, shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, and in the world to come life everlasting.*

SECTION XXXIV.

The miraculous draught of fishes. LUKE V. 1—11.

- 1 **N**OW it came to pass, that when the multitude pressed upon him to hear the word of God, as he stood by the lake of
- 2 Gennesareth, he saw two vessels standing by the lake, but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.
- 3 And entering into one of the vessels, which belonged to Simon Peter, he desired him that he would put out a little way from land; and he sat down, and taught the multitude out of the ves-
- 4 sel. And when he had made an end of speaking, he said to Simon, Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.
- 5 And Simon answering, said unto him, Master, we have been labouring all night and have caught nothing; nevertheless I will
- 6 let down the net at thy word. And when they had done it, they
- 7 enclosed a great multitude of fishes, so that their net brake. And they beckoned to their partners (*James and John*) who were in the other vessel, to come and assist them; and they came and filled both the vessels, so that they were ready to sink.
- 8 Now Simon Peter seeing [this] fell down before the knees of Jesus, and said, go out from me; for I am a sinful man, O
- 9 Lord. For astonishment seized him and all that were with him,
- 10 on account of the draught of fishes which they had taken; and in like manner also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, Do not fear;
- * 11 from this time thou shalt captivate men. And when they had brought their vessels to land, they left all and followed him.

REFLECTIONS.

How wonderful a choice does Jesus make of those who were to be the chief ministers in his kingdom! Surely the same divine power which prevailed on these honest fishermen to leave their little all to follow him, could with equal ease have subdued the hearts of the greatest and wisest of the nation, and have engaged them to have at-

tended him in all his progress through the country, with the exactest observance and the humblest reverence : but he chose rather to preserve the humble form in which he at first appeared, that thus he might answer the schemes of Providence, and by *the weak things of the world confound them that are mighty*. Yet we may observe he does not go to call them that stood all the day idle ; but, on the contrary, confers this honour upon honest industry ; on them that had been toiling all the night in the proper duties of their station and profession in life. Let us pursue our business with vigilance and resolution ; assuring ourselves that, however mean it be, Christ will graciously accept us in it ; and let us fix our dependence on his blessing, as absolutely necessary to our success.

These pious fishermen *let down their net at Christ's word*, and it was not in vain. How vast was that power which brough such a multitude of fishes into it ! but how much greater and more apparently divine was the energy, which, by the ministration of one of these illiterate men, converted at once a much greater number of souls, and turned the despisers and murderers of Christ into his adorers ! Blessed Jesus, we would humbly bow ourselves before thee as the Lord of nature and of grace ; and, instead of saying with Peter, *Depart from us for we are sinful men*, we would rather say, " Lord, for that very reason, while we own ourselves most unworthy of thy presence, we most importunately entreat it : Come unto me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man, and if thou stand at a distance from me, I perish ! Come, and recover my heart from the tyranny of sin ; come, and possess and fix it for thyself ! "

That secret power which these good men felt on their souls, while the words of Christ were sounding in their ears, would be to them a token for good as to the success of their ministry upon others. Surely we cannot wish any thing of greater importance for the edification of the church, than that the persons who are employed in its public offices may themselves experimentally know the power of divine grace, and be brought to a determination to follow Christ whithersoever he goeth, before they undertake to invite and persuade others to do it.

SECTION XXXV.

Christ teaches in the synagogue of Capernaum ; casts out a devil ; and cures Peter's mother-in-law of a fever. MARK i. 21—31. MATT. viii. 14, 15. LUKE iv. 33—39.

AND when our Lord had thus called Peter, Andrew, James, and John, they entered with him into Capernaum ; and immediately on the sabbath-day, going into the synagogue, he taught [them] and they were struck with amazement at his doctrine, for he was continually teaching them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. And there was in their synagogue a man that had the spirit of an unclean demon ; and he cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone ; what hast thou to do with us, O Jesus of Nazareth ? art thou

come to destroy us? I know thee, who thou art; the Holy One of God. But Jesus rebuked him, saying, Be silent, and come out of him: and the demon having thrown him into the midst, [and] having convulsed him, cried with a loud voice and came out of him; but did him no harm. And they were all amazed, so that they inquired of each other, and said, What an event is this! [and] what a new doctrine is this! for with authority and power he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him, and come out. And his fame went forth immediately through all the region of Galilee, into every place of the neighbouring country.

And presently *after*, going out of the synagogue, they came, with James and John, into the house of Simon and Andrew. And Simon's wife's mother kept her bed, of a violent fever; and they presently tell him of her, and entreat him for her *recovery*. And coming and standing near her, he took her by the hand, and raised her up, and rebuked the fever, and immediately the fever left her; and she arose and waited upon them.

REFLECTIONS.

Justly may we join our astonishment with that of the inhabitants of Capernaum, and say, What manner of teaching is this? and with what regard should it be received, when the devils themselves, and the most desperate diseases, are thus apparently subject to him who uses it?—We see the malice of Satan in possessing and tormenting the bodies of men. God then permitted it, to render Christ's triumph over him so much the more illustrious, and the appearance of that great Deliverer so much the more welcome. Such diabolical operations as these are now restrained; and it is matter of great thankfulness that they are. But would to God that malignant enemy did not, in a yet more fatal manner, possess the *souls* of men, and *work in the children of disobedience*! Yet there can the power of Jesus prevail, to *bind the strong man and spoil his goods*. Wisely did Christ silence the suspicious praises of an unclean spirit; and vain is all the hope which men build merely on those orthodox professions of the most important truths, in which Satan himself could vie with them.

Christ, returning from the synagogue, finds the mother-in-law of Peter detained from the solemn assemblies, a prisoner at home under an afflictive providence, which that circumstance of confinement rendered yet more afflictive to her. But the mercy which the evening brought with it was a rich equivalent for all the sorrows of the day. Jesus, their welcome guest, appears as the great Physician both of soul and body; a touch of his hand assuages the tumult in her veins, and at his voice the distemper leaves her. Surely, as the great Lord in the kingdom of Providence, he performs those cures which are now wrought by natural means, and is to be owned in them. Must not each of us thankfully acknowledge how often he hath rebuked fevers and other distempers by the skill of physicians, and the efficacy of medicines: so that they have departed from us perhaps when we esteemed them desperate, and had received the sentence of death in ourselves. Let us learn to imitate the pious gratitude of

this good woman, who, when recovered, immediately arose and ministered unto Christ. Thus let it be our care that those lives which are spared by his goodness, and that strength which is renewed by his power, may be faithfully and affectionately devoted to his service.

SECTION XXXVI.

Christ having performed several cures on the evening of the sabbath-day, retires early the next morning to his devotions ; and takes a circuit about Galilee. MARK i. 32—39. LUKE iv. 40, &c. MATT. viii. 16, 17. iv. 23, &c.

AND in the evening when the sun was set, *and the sabbath was ended*, they brought unto him all that were ill, and many that were possessed with devils. Yea all that had any persons in their houses sick of various distempers, brought them unto him ; and he sent none away with a denial, but cast out the evil spirits with a word, and laid his hands on every one of them, and healed all that were sick ; that it might be accomplished which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, in a nobler sense, “He himself took our infirmities and bore [away] our diseases.” And the whole city was gathered together at the door of the house. And devils also came out of many, crying out and saying, Thou art the Messiah, the Son of God. But he severely rebuked them, and did not suffer them to speak as they would have done ; for they well knew that he was the Messiah ; which title he, for wise reasons, declined receiving as yet, especially from evil spirits.

And in the morning he rose before it was light, and as the day was coming on he went out of the house, and departed to a desert place, and there prayed. And Simon Peter, and they that were with him, followed after him. And when they had found him they said unto him, All the people are seeking after thee. And the multitudes which thus sought after him came to him, at the place where his disciples had found him, and would fain have detained him, that he should not depart from them. But they could not prevail. And he said to them that were his constant attendants, Let us go into the neighbouring towns, that I may preach there also ; for I must also preach the kingdom of God to other cities, as for that purpose I am sent, [and] therefore I came forth.

And Jesus took a circuit through all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the good news of the kingdom ; and casting out devils, and healing every disease and every malady of the people. And his fame went through all Syria ; and they brought to him from thence all sick people that were seized with a variety of distempers and tormenting pains ; even demoniacs, and lunatics, and paralytics, and he healed them. And great multitudes followed him from Galilee, and Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and the rest of Judea, and [the country] about Jordan.

REFLECTIONS.

How delightfully were the sabbaths of Christ spent in the midst of all his fatigues ! How pleasantly did the sun go down upon him, when he had been imitating that heavenly luminary in his steady and constant course ; scattering a brighter light and more beneficial influences upon all about him ! And when the sabbath had been spent in these labours of piety and love, how happily were the fruits of it carried into the ensuing week ? The first morning of it, that it might be most pleasantly and most profitably begun, Jesus rose before it was light, that he might enjoy God and himself in religious retirement. It surely becomes us sometimes willingly to deny ourselves the gratifications of sleep, that we may have the better opportunity for devotion. And it should be the peculiar care of those who are employed in God's public service, to cultivate communion with him in private ; lest, while they *keep the vineyard of others*, their own be neglected and impoverished.

Our Lord's retirement is interrupted by the people who came to inquire after him, and desired to have detained him longer among them ; and who that has ever known the pleasure of conversing with him, would not desire that it might be longer continued and frequently renewed ? But, in this instance, their request must be denied ; the great purposes of his ministry required his presence elsewhere, and he breaks through all that importunity which would have broken in upon his schemes of usefulness : a resolution which we must learn in some cases to imitate if we would prosecute the business of life with vigour and success. Let us often reflect *wherefore we were sent* ; and judge by that where God would have us to be ; that by the intimations of his pleasure every motion may be regulated, and every abode determined.

Wherever Christ removes he still *goes about doing good*, publishing the gospel, and confirming it by the most amazing works of power and of mercy. How well were these miracles suited to awaken men's attention, and to convince their consciences of his divine mission ! Well might his fame go over the whole country ! may it extend itself now to the remotest regions, that *all the ends of the earth may look unto him and be saved*, while he displays a healing power over their spirits proportionable to that which he here exerted on their bodies !

SECTION XXXVII.

Christ begins his Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes, &c. MATT. v. 1—16.

1 **A**ND [Jesus] seeing the multitudes, went up to a mountain, and when he was set down, his disciples came near to him.
 2 And opening his mouth, he taught them saying, Happy are the
 4 poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.—Happy are
 5 they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.—Happy are the
 6 meek, for they shall inherit the earth.—Happy are they that hun-

- ger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.—
- 8 Happy are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.—Happy are
 9 the pure in heart, for they shall see God.—Happy are the peace-
 10 makers, for they shall be called the children of God.—Happy are
 they that are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs
 is the kingdom of heaven.
- 11 Happy are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute
 you, and shall falsely say every thing that is evil of you for my
 12 sake. Rejoice, and triumphantly exult ; because your reward in
 heaven [will be] great ; for thus they persecuted the prophets
 13 who were before you. You are the salt of the earth ; but if the
 salt be grown insipid, with what can it be seasoned ? it is no fur-
 ther of any avail, but to be thrown out of doors and to be trampled
 14 on by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is situa-
 15 ted (*like yonder**) on a mountain, cannot be hid. Neither do men
 light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it giv-
 16 eth light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine be-
 fore men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your
 Father who is in heaven.

REFLECTIONS.

What abundant reason have we to bless God, that this large and edifying discourse of our blessed Redeemer is thus particularly recorded by the sacred historian. Let every one *that hath ears to hear* attend to it ; for surely *never man spake as our Lord here doth*. Let us fix our souls in a posture of humble attention, that we may receive the law from his mouth. He opened it with blessings, repeated and most important blessings. But on whom are they pronounced ? and whom are we taught to think the happiest of mankind ? The meek and the humble, the penitent and the merciful, the peaceful and the pure, those that *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, those that labour, but faint not, under persecution ! Blessed *Jesus* ! how different are thy maxims from those of the children of this world ! They call the *proud happy*, and admire the gay, the rich, the powerful, and the victorious. But let a vain world take its gaudy trifles, and dress up the foolish creatures that pursue them. May our souls share in that happiness which the Son of God came to recommend and to procure ! May we obtain mercy of the Lord ; may we be owned as his children ; may we see his face ; and may we inherit his kingdom ! With these enjoyments, and these hopes, we will cheerfully welcome the lowest or the most painful circumstances.

Let us awaken and stir up our souls to the cultivation of those amiable virtues which are here recommended to our pursuit ; this humility and meekness, this penitent sense of sin, this ardent desire after righteousness, this compassion and purity, this peacefulness and fortitude of soul, and, in a word, this universal goodness which be-

* *Maundrel* says, that *Saphet* (supposed to be the ancient *Bethulia*) might easily be seen from this mountain, and that Christ might point to it. Many have observed that, like *Socrates*, he took his similes from things the most familiar to his hearers, and often before their eyes while he spoke.

comes us as we sustain the character of *the salt of the earth* and *the light of the world*. Is there not reason to lament it, that we answer the character no more? Is there not reason to cry out, with a good man in former times, "Blessed Jesus! either these are not thy words, or we are not Christians!" Oh, season our hearts more effectually with thy grace! Pour forth that divine oil on our lamps! Then shall the flame brighten; then shall the ancient honours of thy religion be revived; and multitudes be awakened and animated by the lustre of it to glorify our Father in heaven. Amen.

SECTION XXXVIII.

Our Lord declares his purpose of establishing the moral law, and enters on his exposition of it. MATT. V. 17—26.

- 17 **S**UPPOSE not that I am come to dissolve the law, or the prophets; I am not come to dissolve, but to complete [them:]
- 18 for verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or one tittle shall pass from the law, till all things be effected.
- 19 Whoever therefore shall violate one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be accounted [one of] the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach [them] he shall be called great in the kingdom of
- 20 heaven. For I say unto you, That unless your righteousness abound more than [that] of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not by any means enter into the kingdom of heaven.
- 21 You have heard that it was said by the ancients "Thou shalt not kill:" and *you have been taught that whosoever shall unlawfully*
- 22 *kill another, shall be obnoxious to the judgment**: but I say unto you, That whosoever shall without cause be angry with his brother, shall be obnoxious to the judgment, and whosoever shall say to his brother, "*Raca*" (i. e. *thou worthless empty fellow*) shall be obnoxious to the sanhedrim: but whosoever shall say "Thou fool" (i. e. *thou graceless wicked villian*) shall be obnoxious to the fire of hell.†
- 23 Therefore, if thou art bringing thy gift to the altar, and there recollectest that thy brother has any *just* [complaint] against thee;
- 24 leaving thy gift there, before the altar, go away, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. *And in case of a legal prosecution, my advice is, Come to a friendly agreement with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with*

* The Jews had a common court of 23 men wherein capital sentences might be passed, on which a malefactor might be strangled or beheaded: this was called *the judgment*. But the *council* or sanhedrim was the supreme court, consisting of 72, in which the highest crimes were tried, which they alone punished with stoning.

† An allusion to the valley of *Hinnom* or *Tophet*, where children were burnt alive to *Molech*; afterwards made a receptacle for the filth of the city, where fires were kept burning to consume it. A fit emblem of Hell, which in Syriac takes its name from thence (*Isa. xxx. 33. Jer. xix. 11—12*) and by the Jews was commonly called (as above) *Gehennah*.

him ; lest the adversary deliver thee to the judge ; and the judge *deciding the cause against thee*, deliver thee to the officer, and
26 thou be cast into prison ; verily I say unto thee, thou shalt not by any means come out from thence, till thou hast discharged the very last farthing.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us seriously consider and often recollect the purposes of Christ's appearance : *he came not to destroy the law and the prophets*, or to dissolve men's obligation to observe them ; but rather to enforce, as well as to fulfil them. How fatally shall we pervert the purposes of his coming ; if we regard him as *the minister of sin* ? How ungratefully shall we abuse the merciful constitution of his gospel, should we take encouragement from thence to violate his law ? Dangerous as well as ungrateful abuse indeed ! For God's eye will be watchful over its honours, and his hand exerted to maintain them : so that heaven and earth shall pass away before it shall fail of its accomplishment in being either obeyed or avenged on the impenitent sinner. May it be our constant care to keep it ourselves, and to teach others to observe it ! May we teach it by our lives as well as our lips ; and let our daily conversation demonstrate how practicable and how amiable its precepts are ! So shall we be *great in the kingdom of heaven*, in the pursuit of which we may give full scope to the noblest ambition of which human nature is capable.

Let our hearts own and feel the spiritual sense of God's law, that we may rise to a more sincere and more extensive righteousness than that of the Scribes and Pharisees. May we *delight in it after the inward man*, and learn to regulate our thoughts and our passions, as well as our external behaviour, by it ! Especially let us avoid all the malignant and ill-natured passions, all thoughts of rash and immoderate anger, all words of contumely and reproach. If we would maintain communion with the God of love, let love govern in our hearts ; and when we come to present our devotions to him, let us *lift up holy hands without wrath*, as well as *without doubting* ; so may we promise ourselves a gracious welcome ; so shall we carry away the most valuable blessings !

But are none of us strangers to this blessed state ? Are none of us obnoxious to the divine displeasure ? If we are so, with what a holy solicitude of soul should we labour to make up the controversy and come to an agreement, while we are yet in the way with this awful adversary ! lest we be immediately hurried before the tribunal of the righteous Judge of all the world, and be delivered into the hands of justice, to be reserved in everlasting chains beyond the possibility of redemption. Lord, we were all the debtors, and, in one sense, the prisoners of thy justice ; and of ourselves were most incapable, not only of paying the uttermost farthing, but even of discharging the least part of the debt ! We bless thee for that generous Surety who has undertaken and discharged it for us ; and by the price of whose atoning blood we are delivered from the *chains of darkness*, and are *translated into the glorious liberty* of thy children.

SECTION XXXIX.

Our Lord's exposition of the law continued. MATT. v. 27, &c.

- 27 **Y**OU have heard that it was said to the ancients, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" *as if that law related only to the*
 28 *grosser acts of uncleanness.* But I say unto you, That whosoever shall gaze on a woman to lust after her, has already committed
 29 adultery with her in his heart. And if thy right eye offend or *ensnare** thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is advantageous to thee that one of thy members should perish, rather
 30 than thy whole body should be thrown into hell. Yea if thy right-hand offend or *ensnare* thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is advantageous to thee, that one of thy members should perish, rather than thy whole body should be thrown into hell.
- 31 It has been said, "Whoever would dismiss his wife, let him
 32 give her a writing of divorce." (*Deut. xxiv. 1.*) But I say unto you, That whosoever shall dismiss his wife, except on account of adultery†, causeth her to commit adultery; and whoever shall marry her that is dismissed, committeth adultery.
- 33 Again, you have heard that it was said to the ancients, "Thou shalt not perjure thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine
 34 oaths." (*Lev. xix. 12.*) But I say unto you, Swear not at all *in your common discourse*; either by heaven, for it is the throne of
 35 God; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for
 36 it is the city of the Great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy
 37 head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your conversation be, Yes, yes; No, no: for whatever is more than these cometh from the evil one.
- 38 You have heard that it has been said, (*Deut. xix. 21.*) "An
 39 eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." But I say unto you, Do not set yourselves against the injurious person: but if any man
 40 strike thee on thy right cheek, turn the other to him also.‡ And if any one be resolved to sue thee at law, and to take away thy vest, permit him to take thy mantle too, *rather than continue the*
 41 *suit.* And if any officer press thee to go one mile,|| go with him
 42 *two, rather than disturb the peace.* Give to him that asketh thee charity, and do not turn away him that would borrow of thee.
- 43 You have heard that it was said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," (*Lev. xix. 18.*) and, *as some have added,* "shalt hate thine
 44 enemy." But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you; and pray for them
 45 that insult you, and persecute you; that you may be *approved as*

* This word (which often occurs in scripture) properly signifies, to be a stumbling-block in a person's way, or an occasion of his fall.

† As the author properly observes in a note that the word here must mean *adultery*, it is inserted as preferable to the coarse term he uses. *Ed.*

‡ A proverbial phrase to express a meek submission to injuries and affronts.

|| Viz. with carriages on the public account. Among the Jews, the disciples of their wise men were exempted from such services, but Christ advises his not to insist on such exemption.

the children of your heavenly Father ; for he causeth his sun to arise on the evil and the good, and showereth down rain on the
 46 just and the unjust. For if you love them *only* that love you, what reward have ye ? Do not even the publicans do the same ?
 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what extraordinary thing do
 48 you *practise* ? Do not even the publicans do so ? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.

REFLECTIONS.

Alas ! how may we blush to call God our Father, while we resemble him so little ! And what reason is there, on a survey of these directions of our Lord, to acknowledge our deficiencies and our faults ! Let us review the many advantages we enjoy as Christians, and the engagements we are under in the particular circumstances in which divine providence has placed us ; and blush to think that *we do* so little *more than others* ; perhaps in many instances falling short even of the virtues of heathens. Let us particularly be instructed by these lessons of our divine Master to recompense good for evil : lessons which come with peculiar grace from his mouth, as he was himself the kindest friend to his most inveterate enemies, and bore and forgave more than any but himself could possibly do.

Let us, who are his disciples, abhor contention and revenge. Let us not prosecute every little injury to the utmost, nor govern ourselves by those false maxims of prudence and honour, which pride and self-love have introduced on the ruins of real Christianity. Let us not, even in the most legal methods, seek the punishment of those who have wronged us, except in circumstances in which we are in our conscience persuaded it will, on the whole, be greater charity to animadvert on the offence than to pass it by ; and even then, let us act in a calm and dispassionate manner, pitying and loving the persons of the injurious, even while, for the sake of society, we prosecute their crimes.

If this be our duty towards our enemies, how inexcusable are we if we are cold and insensible to our friends ! And how much worse than publicans themselves, if we do not love them that love us, and do good to those from whom we have received it. Happy is that Christian to whom the God of nature hath given a heart so turned to sentiments of benevolence that, in all these instances, love is a law unto itself !

Yet let us remember, that the whole of our duty is not comprehended in these social regards. The great Author of our being, who hath endowed us with rational faculties, justly requires that we assert their empire over the meaner powers of appetite and passion. We see that he forbids not only gross enormities, as adultery (which, though so unaccountably spared by the laws of many Christian countries, the heathens themselves have condemned as a capital crime, and which some of the most barbarous nations have esteemed infamous) but the unchastity of the eye, and the heart. Let us then earnestly pray that God would *create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us* ; and let us maintain a most resolute guard over

our senses and our thoughts, remembering that there is no other alternative, but that the dearest of our lusts must be mortified and subdued, or our *whole persons be cast into hell.*

Elevate our affections; O Lord, to nobler objects than those which are suited merely to animal nature ! Teach us to *keep under the body, and bring it into subjection*, that we may not finally *be cast away* from thy presence, and fall into that dreadful state where every drop of sinful pleasure will be recompensed with full vials of misery and despair !

SECTION XL.

Our Lord proceeds to caution his disciples against vain glory in alms-deeds, prayer, and fasting. MATT. vi. 1—18.

1 **T**AKE heed that you practise not your righteousness* before men, to be viewed by them: otherwise you have no reward from your heavenly Father. When therefore, thou performest [thine] alms deeds do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the public assemblies, and in the streets, that they may be applauded of men: verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou art doing [thine] alms let not thy left hand know what thy right hand is doing; that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father who sees in secret, will himself reward thee openly.

2 And, when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the public assemblies, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be viewed by men: verily I say unto you, That they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who sees in secret, will reward thee openly. But when you pray, do not use a vain multiplicity of words, as the heathens do; for they think they shall be heard for their speaking much. Be not ye therefore like them: for your Father knows what you want before you ask him. Thus therefore pray ye,

“ Our Father, who art in heaven, may thy name be sanctified ! May thy kingdom come; may thy will be done, as in heaven, so likewise upon earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And do not bring us into temptation; but rescue us from the evil one: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.” For if you forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their offences, neither will your Father forgive your offences.

Again; when you keep a Fast, be not like the hypocrites, putting on a dismal air; for they deform their countenances, that

* So some ancient copies and versions, which Beza follows. This prevents a tautology.

they may appear to men to fast : verily I say unto you, That they
17 have their reward. But when thou keepest a fast, anoint thy
18 head, and wash thy face ; that thou mayest not appear to men as
one that fasteth, but to thy father who is in secret ; and thy Father
who sees in secret will reward thee openly.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us learn from these repeated admonitions of our blessed Redeemer what is the only acceptable principle of every religious action ; namely, a desire to approve ourselves to God in it : and let us particularly bring it into the instances in which it is here recommended. Our Lord takes it for granted that his disciples would be both charitable and devout. Let us cultivate both these branches of the Christian temper, and avoid ostentation in both ; as remembering the day approaches when every one of us must be made manifest in his true character before the tribunal of Christ. And, oh, what discoveries will then be opened upon the world ! How many specious masks will be plucked off, that the hypocrite's character may appear in its native deformity ! And, on the other hand, how many secret acts of piety and benevolence, which have been industriously concealed from human observation, will then shine forth in all their glory, celebrated and rewarded by God himself, *who sees in secret*, and whose eye penetrates all the recesses of our houses and our hearts ! There may our praise and our portion be ! In the mean time let us with humble pleasure obey the call of our divine Master, and be often addressing our heavenly Father in such language as he hath taught us ; entering for secret exercise of devotion into our closet, and shutting our door, excluding (as far as possible) every thought which would interrupt us in these sacred and happy moments. From thence let our prayers daily come before the throne *like incense*, and the *lifting up of our hands be as the morning and the evening sacrifice*.

Christ himself has condescended to teach us to pray. Attentive to his precepts, animated by his example, and emboldened by his intercession, let us learn and practise the lesson. Shed abroad on our hearts, O Lord, thy *Spirit of adoption*, which may teach us to cry, *Abba, Father !* to draw nigh to thee with filial reverence and confidence, and with fraternal charity for each other, even for the whole family, to whom thou graciously ownest the relation ! Inspire us with that zeal for thy glory which may render the honour of thy name, the prosperity of thy kingdom, and the accomplishment of thy will, far dearer to us than any interest of our own ! On thee may we maintain a cheerful dependence for our daily bread, and *having food and raiment, be therewith content !* most solicitously seeking the pardon of our past sins, and the influences of thy grace to preserve us from future temptations, or to secure us in them ! And may our sense of that need in which we stand of forgiveness from thee, dispose us cordially to forgive each other, especially as thou hast wisely and graciously made this the necessary means of receiving our own pardon ! Our corrupted hearts are too little disposed for these sentiments ; but may God's almighty power produce and cherish them in us ! and

while the comfort is ours, may all the glory be his, through Jesus Christ our Lord ! Amen.

SECTION XLI.

Our Lord cautions his disciples against the love of the world, and anxiety about the morrow. MATT. vi. 19, &c.

- 19 **D**O not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where the
 20 moth and canker consume, and where thieves dig through
 21 and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven ; where
 22 neither moth nor canker can consume, and where thieves cannot
 23 break in, nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your
 24 heart also be. The eye is the lamp of the body ; therefore if
 25 thine eye be clear, thy whole body will be full of light. But if
 26 thine eye be distempered, thy whole body will be full of dark-
 27 ness : if therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how
 28 great is that darkness !
- 29 No man can serve two masters ; but will either hate the one,
 30 and love the other ; or will adhere to the one, and neglect the oth-
 31 er. You cannot serve God and Mammon. Therefore I say unto
 32 you, Be not anxious about your life, what you shall eat, and what
 33 you shall drink ; nor with respect to your body, what you shall
 34 put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than raiment ?
- 35 Look on the birds of the air ; for they neither sow nor reap, nor
 36 gather into hoards ; and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them :
 37 are not you much more valuable than they ? Which of you can,
 38 by [all his] anxiety add to his age one cubit ?
- 39 And as for raiment, why are ye anxious [about that ?] Consid-
 40 er the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, nor do
 41 they spin : yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory
 42 was not arrayed as one of these. And if God so clothe the grass
 43 of the field, which is [flourishing] to day, and to-morrow is thrown
 44 into the furnace, [will he] not much more [clothe] you, O ye of
 45 little faith ? Be not ye therefore anxious, saying, What shall we
 46 eat ? or what shall we drink ? or what shall we wear ? (For the
 47 heathen, seek after all these things ;) for your heavenly Father
 48 knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom
 49 of God and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be ad-
 50 ded to you over and above. Therefore, be not anxious for the
 51 morrow ; for the morrow shall provide for itself ; sufficient to the
 52 present day [is] the evil of it.

REFLECTIONS.

How kind are these precepts of our blessed Redeemer ! the substance of which is indeed but this, *Do thyself no harm*. Let us not be so ungrateful to him, and so injurious to ourselves, as to harass and oppress our minds with that burden of anxiety which he has so graciously taken off. Every verse and clause we have been reading speaks at once to the understanding and the heart. We will not

therefore indulge these unnecessary, these useless, these mischievous cares ; we will not borrow the anxieties and distresses of the morrow to aggravate those of the present day : but rather will we cheerfully repose ourselves on that heavenly Father who *knows that we need these things*, and has given us life, which is more than meat ; and the body, which is more than raiment ; and thus instructed in the philosophy of our heavenly Master will learn a lesson of faith and cheerfulness from every bird of the air, and every flower of the field.

Let the Gentiles that know not God perplex their minds with unworthy suspicions, or bow them down to the ignoble servitude of Mammon, that base rival of our living Jehovah : but we, far from desiring to share our hearts and our services between two such contrary masters, will cheerfully devote them to him, whose right to them is so infinitely beyond all room for any contest. Let us *take heed and beware of covetousness*, and make it our business not to hoard up earthly and corruptible treasures, but *first seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness* : so shall other things be added for present subsistence ; and so shall we *lay up in store an incorruptible treasure in heaven*, in which we shall be rich and happy, when the riches of this world are consumed with their owners, and the whole *fashion of it is passed away*. While these divine maxims are spreading their light about us, let our eye be clear to behold them, and our heart open to receive them ; and let us cautiously guard against those deceitful principles of action which would give a wrong bias to all our pursuits, and turn the light which is in us into a fatal and incurable darkness.

SECTION XLII.

Our Lord cautions his disciples against rash judgment ; exhorts them to impartiality, prudence, prayer, and resolution ; and warns them against seducers. MATT. vii. 1—20.

- 1 **D**O not judge, that you may not be judged. For according
- 2 to the judgment with which you judge *others*, you shall be
- 3 judged ; and by that measure ye mete, it shall be measured back
- 4 to you. But why dost thou look at a mote [*or splinter*] in thy
- 5 brother's eye, while thou observest not the beam in thine own
- 6 eye ? Or how canst thou say to thy brother, Hold still and I will
- 7 take the mote out of thine eye ; while behold, [*there is*] a beam in
- 8 thine own eye ? Thou hypocrite, first clear out the beam from
- 9 thine own eye ; and then wilt thou discern *how* to remove the
- 10 mote out of thy brother's eye.
- 11 Give not holy [*food*] to dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine ;
- 12 lest they trample them under their feet, and turning [*upon you*]
- 13 tear you.
- 14 Ask and it shall be given you ; seek and you shall find ; knock
- 15 and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh receiv-
- 16 eth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh [*the*
- 17 door] shall be opened. And indeed what one man is there among
- 18 you, who, if his son should ask him for bread, will give him

- 10 a stone? Or if he ask for a fish will give him a serpent?
 11 If therefore you, evil as you are, know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more will your Father in heaven,
 12 give good things to those that ask him? Therefore, all things which ye would be willing that men should do to you, do ye also in like manner to them: for this is a *summary of the law and the prophets*.
 13 Enter in through the straight gate; for wide is the gate and spacious the way which leads to destruction; and there are many
 14 who enter by it: because straight is the gate and rugged the way which leads to life; and they who find it are few.
 15 Be on your guard against false prophets, who come to you in
 16 the clothing of sheep; but inwardly are ravening wolves. You may know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from
 17 thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so every good tree produces
 18 good fruit, but a corrupt tree produces bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bear good fruit.
 19 Every tree which beareth not good fruit, is cut down, and cast
 20 into the fire; so that you shall know them by their fruits.

REFLECTIONS.

When will the happy time come in which Christians shall form themselves on these important maxims of their great Master! When shall they be known to be his disciples by the candour of their sentiments, the equity of their conduct, and the beneficence of their actions, as well as by the articles of their faith, and the forms of their worship! Let us all apply these charges to ourselves in the dear and awful name of him that gave them.

What can be more dreadful to us than to think of being severely judged by that God, without whose hourly forbearance and gracious indulgence we are all undone? Let us then exercise that mercy which we need: and to form our minds to this most reasonable temper, let us often be thinking of our own many infirmities, and be humbling ourselves before God on account of them. Animated by the gracious invitations and the precious promises which are here given, with earnest importunity let us make our daily addresses to his throne; asking, that we may receive; seeking, that we may find; and knocking, that the door of mercy may be opened to us. And while any of us feel in our hearts the workings of parental tenderness towards our infant offspring, let us consider it as a delightful emblem of yet greater readiness in our heavenly Father to pity and relieve his children.

May universal righteousness and charity be practised by us in the whole of our behaviour, and may we *always exercise ourselves herein to have a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards men!* May we avoid all manner of injustice, and guard against the sallies of a proud and overbearing temper! May we be upright and benevolent in all our conduct; and make it our constant care to govern our actions by that most equitable rule, *Of doing to others as we would reasonably desire they should do to us*, on a change of our circumstances and theirs! Happy those generous souls in whom the bias of self-love is

so rectified that they can, in this instance, hold the balance between themselves and others with an impartial and unwavering hand ! On the whole, let us remember that we ourselves are at last to be tried by the rule by which we are here directed to judge of others, even by the fruits which we produce. May God by his grace make the tree good, that the productions of it may be found to his glory and the refreshment of all around us, that we may not be *cut down as cumberers of the ground, and cast into the fire* !

The way of life, which our blessed Redeemer has marked out for us in such precepts as these, may indeed, to corrupt nature, appear rugged and narrow, and the gate straight through which we are to pass : but let us encourage ourselves against all these difficulties, by considering that immortal life and glory to which they infallibly lead. Then shall we, doubtless, prefer the most painful way of piety and virtue, though with yet fewer companions than we might reasonably expect, to all those flowery and frequented paths of vice which *go down to the chambers of death*.

SECTION XLIII.

Our Lord concludes his sermon on the mount, representing the necessity of a practical regard to his precepts. MATT. vii. 21, &c.

- 21 **N**OT every one who saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter in-
 22 to the kingdom of heaven : but he who performs the will
 23 of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day,
 24 Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name ? and in thy
 25 name have cast out devils ; and in thy name have done many won-
 26 derful works ? And I will then declare unto them, I never knew
 27 you ; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. Therefore, every
 28 one who heareth these my words, and doeth them, I will compare
 29 him to a prudent man who built his house upon a rock.—And the
 rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat
 upon that house ; and it fell not, for it was founded on a rock. But
 every one that heareth these my sayings, and doeth them not, may
 be compared to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand ;
 —And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds
 blew, and struck on that house ; and it fell, and its ruin was great.
 And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these say-
 ings, the multitudes were struck with amazement at his doctrine.
 For he was teaching them as one that had authority, and not as the
 scribes.

REFLECTIONS.

How justly may our admiration concur with theirs that heard these sayings of our Lord, while we have the honour and pleasure of attending these discourses as the inspired penmen have recorded them, by the assistance of that Spirit who was to *bring all things to their remembrance* ! Are we not struck with the authority of this divine Teacher, so as to bear our witness to the gracious and edifying words

that proceeded out of his mouth? Let us not content ourselves with applauding what we have heard, but let us go away and practise it. Shortly will that stormy day arise which must try the foundation of our hopes. *God will lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.* How thankful should we be that *God has laid in Zion for a foundation, a chief Corner-stone, elect and precious; with an assurance, that he that believeth on him shall not be confounded!* But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon; lest the weight of his ruin be proportionable to the height of his hopes.

We say unto Christ, *Lord, Lord;* but let us remember this will not secure our entering into his heavenly kingdom. Whatever be our profession, or whatever our office in his church, the most splendid and honourable of our works will be vain if we are found *workers of iniquity*; for our great Master will then disown us as those whom he has never approved. Blessed Jesus! it will then be in vain to fly to thee with the importunity of prayer, and to repeat the most earnest addresses. We would now, while yet there is room for it, fall down before thee, entreating thee to add the teachings of thy Spirit to those of thy word, that we may be effectually engaged to *do the will of thine heavenly Father*, that we may finally be confessed and owned by thee, and be admitted *into the joy of our Lord!*

SECTION XLIV.

Jesus descending from the mount, cleanses a Leper. MATT. viii. 1—4
LUKE v. 12—16. MARK i. 40, &c.

NOW as he was coming down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy, seeing Jesus, came to him, entreating him; and kneeling down to him, fell prostrate and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst cleanse me. And Jesus, being moved with compassion, stretched out his hand, and touched him, saying unto him, I will, be thou clean. And immediately as soon as he had spoken, the leprosy departed from him; and he was cleansed. And having strictly charged him, he dispatched him presently away; saying unto him, See thou say nothing unto any one; but go, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift [and] those things which Moses has commanded for thy purification for a testimony to them. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to proclaim the matter abroad. And so much the more there went a fame of him; and great multitudes from all parts came together to him to hear, and to be healed of their infirmities by him. So that he could no longer openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places. And he withdrew into the wilderness, and prayed.

REFLECTIONS.

Our souls are overspread with the *leprosy of sin*: and where should we apply for help but to the healing power and recovering grace of

the great Redeemer ! Be the malady ever so deep, spreading, or inveterate, we may surely adopt the words of the leper before us, and say, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* And how much reason have we to hope his compassion will be moved in our favour, and his power exerted in our cure ? If we have received that favour, we are under the obligation of no command to conceal it. It is, on the contrary, our duty most gratefully to publish it abroad, for the honour of our Benefactor, and the advantage of those who may be encouraged to make the same application in humble hope of the same success.

But when will the happy time come that men shall be as solicitous about their spiritual welfare as about the health of this mortal body ! Almighty Physician ! exert thine energy in this instance as a token of further favours ! Convince men of their pollution and danger, and bow their stubborn knee, that it may bend in submissive and importunate supplication ! Let the compassionate air with which this cure was wrought, be considered by all spiritual physicians as a lesson of condescension and tenderness ; and let the modesty with which it was conducted engage us to avoid every appearance of ostentation and vain-glory.

To conclude ; since Christ himself found it proper to retire into a desert place to pray when crowds of admirers were flocking in upon him, let it teach those who are engaged in the scenes of public business, and fill them up with the greatest applause, yet resolutely to command some seasons for retirement ; as remembering, that the more various and important our public labours are, the more evidently do we need to draw down succour, by ardent prayer, that we may be strengthened and prospered in them.

SECTION XLV.

Christ heals a paralytic ; vindicates his power of forgiving sins ; and calls Matthew the publican. MARK II. 1—14. LUKE V. 17—28. MATT. IX. 2—9.

AND after [some] days he again entered into Capernaum ; and it was heard that he was in the house. And it happened on a certain day, while he was teaching, [several] Pharisees and doctors of the law were sitting by ; who were come out of every town of Galilee, and of Judea, and from Jerusalem ; and the power of the Lord was [present] to heal them *who applied to him*. And immediately so many were assembled that there was not room to receive [them] even about the door ; and he preached the word to them. And behold, they came unto him, bringing a man seized with the palsy, laid on a bed, and carried by four men. And they endeavoured to bring him in and lay him before him. And when they could not find any way to bring him in, and could not come near because of the crowd, they went up to the top of the house*, and uncovered

* The roofs of the houses were flat (*Deut.* xxii. 8.) and accessible on the outside. *Mark* xiii. 5. This room where Christ was, had no chamber over it, and might have a trap door. See 2 *Kings* i. 2.

the roof where [Jesus] was, and when they had pulled it up, they let down [the paralytic] with his couch, through the tiles, into the midst, before Jesus. And Jesus seeing their faith, said to the man that had the palsy, Take courage, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.

But behold, some of the Scribes and Pharisees were sitting there; and reasoning in their hearts, they said within themselves, This man blasphemeth: Who is this? [and] why does this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? And immediately, when Jesus, who knew their thoughts, perceived in his mind that they reasoned thus in themselves, he said to them, Why do you reason thus in your hearts? [and] wherefore do you think [such] evil things? Which is easier to say to this paralytic, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy couch and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man on earth, has authority to forgive sins (he says to the paralytic)—I say unto thee, Arise; and take up thy couch, and go thy way to thine own house. And immediately he rose up before them all; and taking up the couch on which he lay, he went forth to his own house, glorifying God. And when the multitude saw it they were amazed, and glorified God, who had given such power to men. And they were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day: We never saw any thing like it. And he went forth again by the sea-shore; and all the multitude resorted to him; and he taught them. And after these things, as Jesus passed out from thence, he saw a man (a publican) whose name was Matthew [or Levi] the son of Alpheus, sitting at the custom-house, and he said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and left all, and followed him.

REFLECTIONS.

It is a pleasure to reflect upon it that Christ was attended by such vast numbers of people, and that they who were teachers of others should themselves sit down to hear him. But it is melancholy to reflect on the perverse purposes with which many of them came; and how few did, on the whole, *receive his word into their hearts*, so as to *bring forth fruit unto perfection*. Curiosity led some, and interest others; and some came to find occasion of hurting him whose whole business in life was to do good. Yet these low, these vile purposes did not prevent his preaching and working miracles before them, and being ready to exert his power for their benefit. Thus courageous and resolute let us be in the discharge of our duty; thus solicitous, that we may *not be overcome of evil*, but may (which, on the whole, is always in some degree practicable) *overcome evil with good*.

How industrious were the attendants and friends of this poor paralytic to obtain a cure for him! What contrivance, what labour did they use to find a proper opportunity to bring him in, and lay him before Jesus! Ought we not to be as tender and zealous in all the offices of the truest friendship; and to imitate, so far as suits the difference of circumstances, their importunate application, and their lively faith? Theirs had its praise and its reward. Our Lord said to this distempered person, *Thy sins are forgiven thee*. He *pardoned all his iniqui-*

ties, while he healed all his diseases. This was a blessing that would render the cure yet incomparably more valuable; and this reviving declaration had the Son of God a power to add and to pronounce. The Scribes and Pharisees, ignorant and prejudiced as they were, considered such a declaration as blasphemy. Their principle indeed was right, that *God alone has power to forgive sins*, and it is impious for men to claim it; but their application was evidently wrong. The miraculous effect plainly shewed the divine authority of the blessed Jesus. And he has still the *key of David*; he *openeth and no man shutteth*; and *shutteth and no man openeth*. Almighty Saviour, may we each of us receive from thee forgiveness of our sins; and we will not complain though our sicknesses should not immediately be removed! Let us glorify God, who has given this power to his Son; and thankfully acknowledge that we are ourselves, in many respects, the monuments both of his pardoning and healing mercy.

To conclude; let us view with humble wonder and pleasure this further instance of condescension and grace of the Redeemer in the call of Matthew: his condescension in calling to so near an attendance, and so intimate a friendship, a man who was a publican, infamous as that employment was; and his grace, which could immediately inspire him with so firm a resolution of quitting all the profits of it, that he might reduce himself to circumstances of life as precarious as those of his Divine Master. Many, no doubt, censured him as a rash enthusiast, or lunatic, rather than a sober convert; but he is even now reaping the abundant reward; his loss is gain, and his contempt glory.

SECTION XLVI.

Christ goes up to a feast at Jerusalem, and cures an infirm man at the pool of Bethesda. JOHN v. 1—16.

- 1 AFTER this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went
- 2 **A** up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem, near the sheep-[market,] a pool, which is called in the Hebrew language;
- 3 Bethesda, having five porticos.* In these were laid a great number of sick persons, blind, lame, withered; waiting for the moving
- 4 of the water. For at a certain season, an angel descended in the pool and stirred the water; the first therefore that went in after the stirring of the water was cured, whatever the distemper was
- 5 that he was seized with. And a certain man was there, who had
- 6 been thirty-eight years disabled. Jesus seeing him as he lay, and knowing that he had been now a long time [in this condition] says
- 7 to him, Dost thou desire to be cured? The disabled man answered him, Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred; and while I am coming another descends be-

* Three of them are said to be standing to this day. *Maud. Trav.*

† The author pronounces this account of the Pool of Bethesda "the greatest of difficulties in the evangelical history."

8 fore me. Jesus says to him, Arise, take up thy couch and walk.
9 And the man immediately became well, and took up his couch and walked.

10 Now on that day it was the sabbath : The Jews therefore said to him that was cured ; It is the sabbath-day ; it is not lawful for
11 thee to carry a couch. He answered them, He that made me well, even he said to me, Take up thy couch, and walk. They asked him
12 then, Who is the man that said unto thee, Take up thy couch and
13 walk ? Now he that was healed did not know who it was : for as there
14 was a crowd of people in the place, Jesus had slipped away. Afterwards, Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold thou art recovered ; sin no more, lest something worse
15 befall thee. The man went away and told the Jews, that it was
16 Jesus who had restored him to health. And the Jews prosecuted Jesus on this account, and endeavoured to put him to death, because he had done these things on the sabbath-day.

REFLECTIONS.

What reason have we humbly to adore that Almighty Being who *kills and makes alive, who wounds and heals* ! If the Jews had cause of thankfulness for this miraculous interposition, surely those virtues which God has in a natural way bestowed on medicines, and that sagacity which he has given to men for the discovery of those virtues, are matter of much greater acknowledgment, as the blessing is so much more extensive and lasting. But how much greater still are our obligations to him for the blessings of his gospel and the ordinances of his worship, those *waters of life* by which our *spiritual maladies* are healed, and vigour restored to our enfeebled souls ! Let us humbly attend them ; yet during that attendance let us look beyond them ; for surely the efficacy of this pool of *Bethesda* did not more depend upon the descent of the angel, than the efficacy of the noblest ordinances depends on that blessed Spirit which operates in and by them.

Multitudes were continually attending at this pool : and why then is *the house of God forsaken* ? where not one alone, but many, at the same moment, may receive spiritual sight and strength ; yea, and life from the dead ? Yet, alas ! under the diseases of the *soul*, how few desire to be made whole ! Blessed Jesus ! if thou hast awakened that desire in us, we would adore thee for it as a token for good ; and would lift up our believing eyes to thee, in humble expectation that thou wilt graciously fulfil it.

The man who was lately languishing on his couch we quickly after find in the temple : and where should they be found who have been raised up from beds of weakness, and brought out from chambers of confinement but in the sanctuary, rendering their praises to the God of their mercies ? How reasonable is the caution which our Lord gave him there ! *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.* May we see sin as the root of all our afflictions ; and, by the bitterness of them, may sin be embittered to us, and our hearts fortified against relapsing into it, especially when we have been chastised, and restored again !

One would have expected that, when this grateful creature published the name of his Benefactor, crowds should have thronged about Jesus, to have heard the words of his mouth, and to have received the blessings of his gospel ; and that the whole nation should have gloried in the presence of such a person, as far more valuable than the descent of a heavenly spirit at some particular seasons for the cure of their diseases, or even the abode of an incarnate angel among them would have been. But instead of this, behold the malignity of our fallen nature, and the force of stubborn prejudice ! They surround him with an hostile intent ; they even conspire against his beneficial life ; and for an imagined transgression in a point of ceremony, would have put out this *light in Israel*. Let us not wonder then if *our good be evil spoken of*. Let us not wonder, if even candour, benevolence, and usefulness, do not wholly disarm the enmity of some ; especially of those who have been taught to prefer *sacrifice to mercy* ; and who, disrelishing the genuine contents of the gospel, naturally seek occasion to slander and persecute the professors, and especially the defenders of it.

SECTION XLVII.

Christ vindicates his miracle at the pool on the sabbath, and declares the dignity of his person and office. JOHN. V. 17—30

- 17 **B**UT Jesus, being questioned by the Jews for this cure on the sabbath-day, answered them, My Father worketh even till
 18 now ; and I also work. For this reason therefore, the Jews endeavoured the more to put him to death, because he had not only
 19 violated the sabbath, but had also called God his own Father, so as to make himself equal with God. Jesus therefore, answered and
 said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, unless he see the Father doing it ; for whatsoever
 20 things he doeth, even these likewise doeth the Son. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that he himself doeth ; and he will shew him greater works than these, that
 21 you may wonder, For as the Father raises up and animates the
 22 dead, so also the Son animates whom he will. For the Father judges no man, but has given all judgment to the Son ; that all
 23 may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth
 24 in him that sent me, hath everlasting life : and shall not come into condemnation ; but is passed from death to life.
 25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, the season cometh and is now, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they
 26 that hear it shall live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has also given to the Son, that he should have life in himself.
 27 And he has given him authority also to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Wonder not at this, for the hour is
 28 coming in which all that are in their graves, shall hear his voice,

29 and shall come forth ; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of
 30 damnation. I can of myself do nothing : as I hear, I judge ; and my judgment is just ; because I seek not any will of my own ; but the will of the Father who sent me.

REFLECTIONS.

With what humble prostration of soul should we bow before the Lord Jesus Christ while we read such words as these ! Though he appeared under *the form of a servant* ; and as man and mediator, confessed a holy subjection to his father, and his God ; yet is he his own, his only-begotten Son, the Son whom he loves, whom he honours, whom he commands all men to honour even as himself, and to whom such power and authority are committed, that he is the principle of life, and administrator of judgment. Let us adore the wisdom of such a contrivance, that he who humbled himself thus low, should be so highly exalted. Let us labour to secure an interest in him ; treating him with that submission, duty, and obedience, which becomes at once the divinity of his nature, and the dignity of his office. May we be enabled by divine grace so to hear the voice of his gospel, that we may arise to a life of holy obedience ; that we may another day hear him with joy calling forth our sleeping dust, and arise to the resurrection of life ; while those that have despised and rejected him, shall find themselves the helpless prisoners of his justice, and with reluctance and terror come forth to the resurrection of damnation !

SECTION XLVIII.

Christ goes on to represent the proofs of his mission ; and concludes with proper admonitions and cautions. JOHN v. 31, &c.

31 IF I bear witness of myself, my testimony is not [to be admitted]
 32 as] true. There is another that beareth witness of me ; and I
 33 know that the witness which he beareth of me is true. You sent unto
 34 John, and he bore testimony to the truth. I do not indeed receive
 35 testimony from man ; nevertheless, I say these things, that you
 36 may be saved. He was a burning and a shining light ; and for a
 37 while you were disposed greatly to rejoice in his light. But I
 38 have a testimony greater than [that] of John ; for the works which
 39 the Father has assigned me, that I might accomplish them, even these
 40 works which I perform, bear testimony to me, that the
 41 Father hath sent me. And the Father who has sent me, has himself borne witness to me ; [though] you have never either
 heard his voice, or seen his form. And you have not his word abiding in you : for you do not believe him whom he hath sent.
 You search the scriptures ; because you apprehend that you have eternal life in them ; and these are [the very writings] which
 bear testimony to me. And yet you will not come to me, that you may have life. I receive not glory from men. But I know you, that

43 you have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me not : if another should come in his
 44 own name, him you would receive. How can you believe, while you are receiving honour of each other, and seek not that honour
 45 which [comes] from God alone ? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father ; that Moses in whom you trust is your accuser.
 46 For if you had believed Moses, you would have believed me ; for
 47 he wrote concerning me. But if you do not believe his writings, how shall you believe my words ?

REFLECTIONS.

How various is the evidence of our Redeemer's mission, and with what pleasure should we trace it in the testimony which John bore, the miracles which himself wrought, the testimony of the Father to him, and the predictions which the prophets uttered and recorded ! To confirm our faith in all, let us be daily *searching the scriptures*, as the oracles of God, and the great fountains of life and salvation. We profess a regard to them : may that regard never be our condemnation ! or the blessed penmen witness against us, as Moses did against those who gloried in his writings, and yet wanted a true faith in them !

In proportion to the degree in which we are convinced of the truth of Christ's religion, let us set ourselves to cultivate the temper which he exercised. He *sought not glory from men*, but made his Father's will the rule of his actions, and his Father's honour the end of them. Let us not greedily catch at human applause, but aim at an infinitely nobler object, even *the honour that cometh from God alone*, the only true judge of actions and characters, because the only discernor of hearts. May we have not only his word in our hands, but *his love remaining in us* ; that thereby our natural aversion to the methods of his saving grace in the gospel may be subdued, that notwithstanding the obstinacy of our degenerate wills we may *come unto Christ that we may have life* ! May we receive him with the greatest readiness, as coming to us in the Father's name ; and not only *for a season rejoice in his light*, but *stedfastly continue in his word*, as made known to all nations for the obedience of faith ; that the advantages which we enjoy may not be found to aggravate our guilt, and to condemn us with the unbelieving Jews !

Christ shewed the tenderness of his compassion even in the severity of his rebukes, and spoke these awful and awakening words that these his unjust and inveterate enemies might be saved. May they be the *power of God unto our salvation* ! as they will be, if we believe in him whom he hath sent.

SECTION XLIX.

Christ vindicates his disciples against the Pharisees, in gathering corn on the sabbath. LUKE vi. 1—5. MATT. xii. 1—8. MARK ii. 23, &c.

AND it came to pass, that about this time, on the first sabbath after the second [day of unleavened bread*] Jesus went through the corn-fields; and his disciples were hungry, and began, as they went, to pull off the ears of corn, and rubbing them in their hands, did eat *the grain*. And some of the Pharisees, when they saw it, said to them, Why do ye that which it is not lawful to do on the sabbath days? And, *that they might involve their Master also in the same charge* they said to him, Behold, thy disciples do that which it is not lawful to do on the sabbath. And Jesus said, in answer to them, Have ye never read that which David did in his necessity, when he and they that were with him were hungry? How he went into the house of God, in the days of Abiathar, *who was afterwards* the high priest, and took and eat the shew-bread, and gave it also to those that attended him; which it was neither lawful for him nor them to eat, but for the priests alone?

Or have ye not read in the law, that the priests in the temple, *perform servile works* on the sabbath-days, *by which others would be reckoned* to profane the sabbath, and are blameless? Now I say unto you, That there is [something] greater than the temple here. And he said unto them *further*, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.—But if ye had known what this *scripture* meaneth (*Hos.* vi. 6.) “I require mercy and not sacrifice;” you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath itself.

REFLECTIONS.

With pleasure we observe the zeal which these attendants of Christ express, who chose on a sacred festival to expose themselves to hunger as well as toil, rather than they would lose the benefit of his instructions, which, like the heavenly manna on the day preceding the sabbath, were then poured out in a double plenty. But what numerous auditory is so candid as to contain none who come, like these Pharisees, with a desire to cavil rather than to learn! The malignity of their temper sufficiently appeared in taking exception at so small a circumstance: *hypocrites* that could thus *strain at a gnat*, and yet *swallow a camel*, scrupling to rub out a few grains of corn, while they sought to *devour widows houses*, and were, under this grave mask of the strictest piety, inwardly full of rapine and all wickedness!

* So I venture to render this singular word *δευτερονπρωτον*, yet not without much hesitation.

† This certainly implies, that the sabbath was an institution of distinguished importance; and may perhaps also refer to that signal authority by which it was changed from the seventh to the first day of the week.

Let us attend to the apology Christ makes for his disciples. It speaks his own authority, as *greater than the temple*, and *Lord of the sabbath* : and well might he, *in whom dwelt all the fulness of the God-head bodily*, without the least presumption, use such language as this. It likewise declares much of the genius of his religion, which deals not in forms and ceremonies, and dispenses even with rituals of a divine appointment, when humanity and benevolence interfere with the observance of them. Since God *will have mercy rather than sacrifice*, let us abhor the perverseness and wickedness of those who sacrifice mercy itself, not merely to ceremonies of a divine original, but to their own arbitrary inventions, superstitious dreams, and precarious though confident determinations. Let us practise habitual caution and candour, lest, before we are aware, we *condemn the innocent* and the pious, and become guilty of what is much more displeasing in the sight of God than the faults which a peevish and censorious temper may fancy it discovers in our brethren.

SECTION L.

Christ on a following sabbath, cures a man whose hand was withered, and vindicates that action. LUKE vi. 6—11. MATT. xii. 9—15. MARK iii. 1—7.

NOW it came to pass also, when he was departed from thence, that on another sabbath, he entered again into the synagogue, and taught. And behold there was a man present whose right hand was withered. And the Scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath-day ; that they might find an accusation against him. But knowing their thoughts, he said to the man who had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand in the midst ; and he arose, and stood.—And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to cure on sabbath-days ? that they might accuse him. And he said to them, What man is there of you, who, if he have but one sheep that on the sabbath-day should fall into a pit, would not lay hold of it and raise it up ? Now how much is a man better than a sheep ? So that it is lawful to do well on sabbath-days.

Then Jesus said *further* to them, I will ask you one thing *more* ; Is it lawful to do good on sabbath-days, or to do evil ? to save life or to destroy and kill *the innocent* ? But they were silent. And when he had looked round upon them all with indignation, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he says to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored, well as the other. And the Pharisees *were so incensed that they went out*, and immediately took counsel with the Herodians* against him, how they might destroy him. And they were filled with madness, and discoursed with each other, what they might do to Jesus. But Jesus knowing *it* withdrew himself from thence, with his disciples, to the sea of Galilee.

* A sect of men who seem to have distinguished themselves by their zeal for the family of Herod ; and consequently for the authority of the Romans.

REFLECTIONS.

What actions are so fair and lovely, that malice cannot turn them into reproach ! What characters are so unblemished, what so exemplary, that uncharitableness cannot revile and condemn them ! While the eyes of distressed multitudes were turned to Christ as their, only Physician and most valuable Friend, the eyes of the Pharisees are continually upon him for evil : and they behold his wondrous miracles, not for their own conviction, but that they may, if possible, turn them into the means of his destruction. So ineffectual are the most obvious and demonstrative arguments, till divine grace conquer men's natural aversion to a Redeemer's kingdom, and captivate their hearts to the obedience of faith.

To have reviled and dishonoured Christ, and to have endeavoured to prevent the success of his ministry, had been a daring crime : but these desperate wretches conspire against his life ; and, different as their principles and interests were, form a transient friendship, to be cemented by his blood. Blessed Jesus ! well mightest thou say, *Many good works have I shewn you, and for which of them would you murder me ?*

What reasoning could be more plain and forcible than this which our Lord used ? and yet, like deaf adders, they stop their ears, and harden their hearts against it. Inhuman creatures, that were more concerned for the safety of a sheep than the happiness of a man ! Yet would to God that unworthy temper had died with them ; for surely there are those, even among professing Christians, who regard their cattle more than even the souls committed by Providence to their care, and therefore, no doubt, more than their own too ! The indignation which Christ felt on this occasion was a just and amiable passion. Happy they, whose anger, like his, is only awakened by sin, and burns only to destroy that accursed thing !

The malice of the Pharisees did not restrain the benevolence of our compassionate Saviour, nor deprive the poor patient of his cure. Such let our conduct be ! Let us not be overcome of evil : let not the most unjust censures, or the most malicious opposition, break our spirits so as to prevent us from doing our duty. If others are mad with persecuting rage, let us pity them ; and let all their fury against the cause of God be improved as a motive to excite our most zealous and courageous endeavours for its service.

SECTION LI.

Christ retiring to the sea-side cures great multitudes, and fulfils Isaiah's prophetic description of his conduct. MARK iii. 7—12. MATT. xii. 15—21.

AND a great multitude followed him from Galilee, and from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan. And a great multitude from the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon, having heard what great things he did, came to him. And he spoke to his disciples, that a little vessel should be in readiness near

him, because of the multitude, that they might not throng him. For he had healed many, and *indeed all that applied to him*; so that they rushed in upon him, *even as many as were under any scourge of God's afflicting hand, that they might touch him*. And they who were possessed with impure spirits, as soon as they saw him, fell down before him; and cried out, saying, thou art the Son of God.

And he charged them with strictness, that they should not make him known: that it might be accomplished which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, "Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved, in whom my soul does acquiesce: for I will put my Spirit upon him; and he shall proclaim judgment to the heathen. He shall not contend, nor cry out; nor shall any one hear his voice in the streets, *as giving a disquieting alarm*. He shall not break a bruised reed, nor extinguish the smoking flax*, *when it is beginning to kindle*, till he send forth judgment to victory; or till he make his righteous cause triumph over all opposition. And the Gentiles shall confide in his name." Chap. xlii. 1—4.

REFLECTIONS.

Surely *fact* does not more exactly answer to *fact in water* than the character of Christ drawn by the prophet, to his temper and conduct as described by the Evangelists. How should *Sion* rejoice, and the daughter of Jerusalem shout, that such a King cometh unto her, meek and having salvation! Let us with pleasure trace his gentle administration, and with a cheerful confidence commit our souls to so kind and so faithful a hand: far from breaking, he will strengthen the bruised reed; far from quenching the smoking flax, he will rather blow it up into a flame.

How well does it become the disciples of Christ, and especially how well does it become his ministers, to imitate what was so amiable in their Lord, and not to despise the day of small things! Let us not strive nor cry; but, laying aside all unnecessary contentions and angry debates, let us receive one another as Christ hath received us, and, avoiding all vain ostentation, let us silently and meekly attend, each of us, to the discharge of his proper office. So may we hope that the cause of religion will go on successfully around us, and that righteousness will in due time be brought forth to complete victory over all opposition, and, by its own genuine influences, be happily established in the earth.

The Gentiles trust in a Redeemer's name, and the British Isles are numbered among those that wait for his law. May our souls with humble submission bow themselves to receive it, and observe it with such faithful care and obedient regards, that our example, wherever it is seen, may promote the reception of it among those that as yet are strangers to it!

* Proverbial expressions to signify a person of a most gentle character.

SECTION LII.

Our Lord, having spent the night in prayer on a mountain, chooses the twelve apostles; and performs a great number of miracles. LUKE vi. 12—19. MARK iii. 13—19.

AND it came to pass in those days, that he went forth to a mountain to pray; and he continued all night at his devotions, in an oratory devoted to the service of God*. And when it was day, he called his disciples to him, *even those whom he pleased*, and they came to him; and out of them he chose *and* constituted twelve, whom he also named apostles; that they should *continually* be with him; and that he might send them abroad to preach, and to have power to heal distempers, and to cast out demons; and *they were these*: Simon *whom he surnamed Peter, that is, a rock*; and James *the son of Zebedee*; and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which signifies, Sons of thunder; and Andrew; and Philip; and Bartholomew; and Matthew, *or Levi*; and Thomas; and James *the son of Alphaeus*; and Thaddeus, *also called Judas, or Jude, the brother of James*; and Simon the Canaanite, called *also Zelotes*; and Judas Iscariot, *or a man of Carioth (Josh. xv. 25.)* who also was the traitor, that even betrayed him.

And he came down *from the mountain* with them, and stood in the plain: and the crowd of his disciples *gathered round him*, and a multitude of people from all Judea, and Jerusalem, and from the shore of Tyre and Sidon; who came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases: And they *also* who were infested with unclean spirits; and they were cured. And the whole multitude endeavoured to touch him; for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.

REFLECTIONS.

When we consider how much the church in all ages has been indebted to the labours of the apostles, and how much we ourselves owe to them, we shall see great reason of thankfulness to our wise and gracious Master, who was pleased to assign this work to his servants, and so eminently to qualify them for it. It is observable, that before he sent them forth, he chose them to be with him in a more constant attendance on his person and ministry. May all who succeed them as preachers of the gospel, be such as have intimately known Christ themselves, and have been accustomed to spiritual converse with him; that they may with the greater ability, zeal, and efficacy, recommend him to others!

We may assure ourselves that these his future ministers had no inconsiderable share in those petitions in which, with unabating fervour and intenseness of devotion, our Redeemer spent this memorable night. And if we have any regard for the support of religion in the rising age, let us likewise be earnestly praying both for them that are already in the ministry, and for such as are preparing for it.

* There were several such places, called *Proscuchæ*, or prayer-houses, situate by rivers, surrounded by trees, and open at the top.

This surely ought to be the frequent care, not only of those who have the tremendous charge of educating such as are ere long to be intrusted with the honour of the gospel and the care of souls, but of those who are now struggling with the glorious labours and trials of that important office, and even of all those private Christians, who cordially love the interest of their Master, and wish the salvation of their fellow creatures.

Let us unite our cries to him who has engaged to be *always with his church even to the end of the world*, and say, Light up, O Lord, a brighter and stronger flame in the lamps of thy sanctuary! Polish these arrows of thy quiver, that they may pierce deep into the consciences of men! Let thy *priests be clothed with salvation*, that thy *saints may shout aloud for joy*! And pour forth upon them so plenteous an unction of thine Holy Spirit, that the odours of thy grace may by their means be diffused around throughout all thy tabernacles; like that of the fragrant oil, which was poured on *the head of Aaron*, in such rich abundance, that it not only *ran down on his beard*, but reached even to *the skirts of his garments*! Amen, and Amen.

SECTION LIII.

Christ repeats in the plain, many passages of his sermon delivered on the mount, LUKE vi. 20—36.

- 20 **A**ND [Jesus] lifting up his eyes on his disciples and apostles,
 said, Happy are you poor; for the kingdom of God is yours.
 21 Happy are you who are now hungry; for you shall be filled. Happy
 22 are you who mourn; for you shall laugh. Happy are you when
 men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you *from their*
assemblies, and shall reproach you, and cast out your names as
 23 evil, on account of the son of man. Be glad in that day, and leap
 for joy; for, behold, your reward in heaven is great: For thus
 their fathers did to the prophets.
 24 But wo to you who are rich! for you have received your conso-
 25 lation*. Wo unto you who are filled! for you shall suffer hunger.
 Wo unto you who now laugh! for you shall mourn and lament.
 26 Wo unto you when all men speak well of you! for thus did their
 27 fathers to the false prophets. But I say unto you that hear *me*,
 28 Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; bless them
 29 that curse you; and pray for them that spitefully abuse you. And
 if a man smite thee on the *one* cheek, *rather than return the blow*,
 offer also the other to him; and if he take away thy mantle, do
 not *by violence* hinder him from taking also thy vest.
 30 Give to every one that asketh thee *for an alms, where it is chari-*
ty to do it; and from him that taketh away thy possessions, do not
 demand them back, *in the forms of law, but rather endeavour by*
 31 *gentler methods to reduce the offender to reason.* And as you

* It is evident, such expressions as these are to be taken with some limitations, otherwise they would in some instances be contrary to fact.

would that man should do to you, do you also in like manner to
 32 them. For if you *only* love them that love you, what thanks are
 33 due to you? For even sinners love those that love them. And if
 you do good *only* to them that are your benefactors, what thanks
 34 are due to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend
only to them from whom you hope to receive, what thanks are due
 to you? For even sinners lend to sinners, that they may receive
 the like.

35 But *I* exhort, love your enemies, and do good, and lend when
 you can hope for nothing again; and so your reward will be
 great, and you will be sons of the most High; for he is kind to
 36 the ungrateful and evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as also your
 heavenly Father is merciful.

REFLECTIONS.

How necessary is it, that our forgetful hearts should have *line upon line and precept upon precept*? If Christ did not think it improper to repeat this discourse, surely it will not be needless for us to renew our attention to it. Oh that every word of it were engraven on our hearts as with the point of a diamond, that we might learn, in spite of all the foolish wisdom of this world, to form ourselves on these maxims, as the surest guide to present and to eternal felicity! Our Lord again pronounces the poor and the hungry, the mournful and the persecuted, happy; and represents those as miserable who are rich and full, joyous and applauded: not that this is universally the case; but because prosperous circumstances are so frequently a sweet poison, and affliction a healing though bitter medicine. Let the thought reconcile us to adversity; and awaken our caution when the world smiles upon us; when a plentiful table is spread before us, and our cups runneth over; when our spirits are gay and sprightly: or when we hear, what to corrupted nature is too harmonious music, that of our own praise from men. Oh that we may secure, what is of infinitely greater importance, the praise of our heavenly Master, by a constant obediential regard to these his precepts!

May we be happy proficient in the art of bearing and forgiving injuries! May we be *ready to every good word and work*! maintaining an eye quick to observe, a heart tender to feel, a hand open to relieve, the calamities and necessities of friends, of strangers, and of enemies: giving to some; and where perhaps, there may be little prospect of a return, lending to others; which, if it engage them to greater industry, is as real a benefit as if the loan were a gift. On the whole, let us not presume to call God our Father, if we do not labour to resemble him; nor dare to challenge the peculiar honour and privileges of Christ's disciples, if we do not distinguish ourselves from others by the charity of our tempers and the usefulness of our lives, as well as by the articles of our faith, and the forms of our worship.

SECTION LIV.

Other passages of the sermon on the mount reflected with some additions. LUKE vi. 37, &c.

37 **J**UDGE not, and you shall not be judged : Condemn not others,
and you shall not be condemned : Forgive, and you shall be
38 forgiven. Give, and it shall be given to you ; men shall *as it were*
pour into your lap good measure ; blessings pressed down, and
shaken together, and *even* running over ; for by the same mea-
sure, that ye measure with *to others*, it will be measured back
to you.

39 He spake also, a parable to them, *to caution them against an im-*
plicit faith in ignorant teachers. Can the blind guide the blind ?

40 Will they not both fall into a pit ? The scholar is not above his

41 teacher ; but every finished scholar will be as his master. And
why dost thou look at the little mote [or splinter] which is in thy

42 brother's eye, and observest not the beam in thine own eye ? Or
how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, hold still, and I will
take out the mote which is in thine eye, while thou seest not the
beam which is in thine own eye ? Thou hypocrite, first cast out
the beam from thine own eye, and then thou wilt discern *how* to

43 take out the mote that is in thy brother's eye. *Till thou shalt thus*
reform thyself, do not expect to reform others ; for there is no good
tree which produces bad fruit ; neither *is there* any bad tree which

44 produces good fruit : for every tree is known by its proper fruit.

Men, for instance, do not gather figs of thorns, nor do they gather
45 a cluster of grapes from a bramble. A good man produces that
which is good, out of the good treasure of his heart ; and a bad
man, out of the bad treasure of his heart, produces that which is
bad ; for his mouth speaks from the overflowing of his heart.

46 And why do ye call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which
47 I say ? I will shew you to whom that man is like, who comes to

48 me, and hears my words, and practises them : He is like a *pru-*
dent man that built an house, and laid the foundation upon a rock :
and when the inundation came, the current violently broke upon
that house, and was not able to shake it, because it was founded

49 upon a rock. But he that hears, and does not practise, is like a
man that built an house on the ground, without a foundation ;
against which the stream did violently break, and it presently fell
down ; and the ruin of that house was great.

REFLECTIONS.

Let a frequent reflection on our own faults teach us candour ; and
let a sense of our continued dependence on the divine liberality make
us liberal towards those that need our assistance ; lest we lose the
comfort so justly forfeited, and abused mercies be another day re-
paid with *measures of wrath, pressed down, shaken together, and run-*
ning over. We are another day to give an account of ourselves be-
fore God : let us then judge for ourselves in matters of religion ; and

be very careful that we do not stupidly follow *blind guides*, till we fall with them into destruction. *Lead us, O Lord, in the way everlasting !* Form us to a more perfect resemblance of our great Master ! Make us severe to ourselves, and, so far as it is real charity, indulgent to others ! Sanctify our hearts by thy grace, that they may be as *trees bringing forth good fruit*, or as fountains pouring out wholesome streams ! There may a *good treasure* be laid up, from whence good things may be abundantly produced ! There may those holy and benevolent affections continually spring up, which may flow forth with unaffected freedom, to refresh the souls and animate the graces of all that are around us !

May these beautiful, striking, repeated admonitions, which our Saviour gives us of the vanity of every profession which does not influence the practice, be attended to with reverence and fear ! We are building for eternity ; may we never grudge the time and labour of a most serious inquiry into the great fundamental principles of religion ? May we discover *the sure foundation*, and raise upon it a noble superstructure, which shall stand fair and glorious when hypocrites are swept away into everlasting ruin, in that awful day in which *heaven and earth shall flee away from the face of him that sits upon the throne !*

SECTION LV.

Christ goes to Capernaum and miraculously cures the centurion's servant. LUKE vii. 1—10. MATT. viii. 5—13.

NOW when he had finished all *these* his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered into Capernaum. And the servant of a certain *Roman officer, called a centurion (from having the command of a hundred men)* who was greatly esteemed by him, was ill, and in danger of death. And hearing of Jesus, when he entered into Capernaum, *he came to him ; but first sent unto him the elders of the Jews, entreating him that he would come and heal his servant ; and saying, Lord, my servant lies in my house, seized with a palsy ; dreadfully tormented. And being come to Jesus, they entreated him with great importunity, saying, He is worthy of this favour ; for he loves our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come, and heal him.*

And Jesus went with them. And now, when he was not a great way from the house, the centurion sent *other* friends to him ; and at last came in person ; and answered, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself ; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof : wherefore neither did I think myself worthy to come to thee ; but only speak the word, and my servant shall be healed. For even I who am a man ranged under authority, have soldiers under myself ; and I say to one, Go, and he goeth ; and to another, Come, and he cometh : and to my slave, Do this, and he doeth it. And Jesus hearing these things admired him ; and turning about, he said to the multitude that followed him, Verily, I declare unto you, That I have not

found, even in-Israel, such faith. But I say unto you, That many shall *at last* come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into that darkness which is without : there shall be weeping and gnashing of the teeth. And Jesus said to the centurion, Go thy way ; and be it unto thee according to thy faith. And in that very hour was his servant healed. And they who had been sent returning to the house, found the servant that had been sick restored to perfect health.

REFLECTIONS.

It is pleasant to think of this good centurion, who, amidst all the temptations of a military life, retained the principles, not only of liberality and humanity, but of piety too ; and, probably amidst the raillery of his irreligious and idolatrous brethren, had the courage to frequent, and even to build, a synagogue. Surely his devotion did not enervate, but rather invigorate and establish, his valour ; nor did he find himself less dutifully regarded by the soldiers under his command for his parental tenderness to his afflicted servant, which brought him thus humbly to petition Christ in his favour. Such may our officers be ! and we may hope that the hosts of heaven will with pleasure *cover their heads in the day of battle*, and obedient troops be formed, by their example and their care, to the discipline of virtue as well as of war.

We see the force of real goodness to conquer the most inveterate prejudices : the elders of the Jews at *Capernaum* turn petitioners for a Gentile, for a Roman centurion : so may we disarm the virulency of a party spirit, and conciliate the friendship of those who otherwise might have their eyes upon us for evil ! In plentiful circumstances and an honourable station, how great is the humility of this worthy man ! How low are the thoughts that he has of himself ! And with what veneration and respect does he address himself to Christ ! And, had this centurion been even a tribune or a general, this humble address would well have become him when he was thus applying unto Christ. And how well does it become us, when entreating the blessed Jesus to exert his healing power on our hearts, to bow with deep humility before him, and to say, *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof, or worthy the honour of appearing in thy presence !* He that thus humbles himself, shall be exalted : nor do we ever stand fairer for the praise of Christ than when we see ourselves undeserving even of his notice.

Behold an instance of faith in a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, by which their unbelief was condemned ! Oh that the virtues of heathens may not another day rise up to our condemnation, notwithstanding an higher profession and much nobler advantages ! We cannot but rejoice to hear that *many shall come from the east and the west, to sit down with the pious patriarchs in the kingdom of heaven* : but how deplorable is the case of those *children of the kingdom*, who, with all their towering expectations, *shall be cast out*, and doomed to hopeless sorrow and to everlasting darkness ! May almighty grace

awaken those who are now ignorant of the value and importance of the blessings of the gospel; and excite those holy desires after them, which may prevent that impatience and envy, that rage and despair, with which they must otherwise view them at an unapproachable distance; yea, view them possessed by multitudes, whom they are now most ready to despise!

SECTION LVI.

Jesus goes the next day to Naim, and raises the son of a poor widow from the dead. MARK iii. 19—21. LUKE vii. 11—17.

AND before Jesus left Capernaum with his apostles, they went in to an house in that city. And the multitude assemble again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And, when his friends had heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him; for they said, He is transported too far.

And it came to pass on the next day, that he went to a city called Naim; and many of his disciples went with him, and a great multitude. And when he approached the gate of the city, behold, a dead person was carried out* in funeral procession, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and there was a great multitude of the city with her. And the Lord seeing her, was moved with compassion for her; and said unto her, Weep not. And approaching he touched the bier, and the bearers stood still; and he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise! And he who had been dead, sat up†, and began to speak; and he delivered him to his mother. And a dread fell upon all; and they glorified God; saying, Truly a great prophet is risen up among us; and God has regarded his people. And this report of him, went forth through all Judea, and the whole region that was round about.

REFLECTIONS.

It surely becomes us likewise to glorify God on account of this great Prophet, whom he has raised up, not only to his ancient people Israel, but to be for salvation to the ends of the earth. Welcome, thou Messenger of the Father's love! How illustrious thy miracles! how important thy doctrine! how beneficent and amiable the whole of thy behaviour! He went from Capernaum to Naim, still on the same blessed errand, to do good to the bodies and the souls of men. Oh that our lives, in their humbler sphere, might be such a circle of virtues and graces! that we might thus go about doing good; and might learn, by the happiest of all arts, to make the close of one useful and pious action the beginning of another!

Of him may we learn the most engaging manner of conferring benefits; that lovely mixture of freedom and tenderness, which heightens the sweetness, and doubles the value, of every favour! May our

* They buried without the walls of their cities.

† They used no coffins, the corpse on the bier was covered only with a kind of mantle.

hearts imbibe the same temper, and it will diffuse on our actions some proportionable gracefulness ! May our bowels, like his, yearn over the afflicted, and our hand be ever ready thus gently to wipe away their tears ! But, O gracious Redeemer, how impotent is our pity when compared with thine ! with thine, which could call back lamented children from the grave, and turn the sorrows of a weeping parent into a torrent of joy ! We are sometimes ready fondly to say, "Oh that thou hadst been near when the darlings of our hearts were snatched away from us, and we left them in the dust !" But thou indeed *wast near* ; for *thou hast the keys of death and the unseen world* ! And this we know, that, if our beloved children are sleeping in thee, thy voice shall at length awaken them ; and thou wilt deliver them to us, to die no more ; and wilt thyself graciously take part in that mutual and lasting joy which thou shalt give to us and to them.

SECTION LVII.

John the Baptist sends two of his disciples to Jesus, to inquire whether he was the Messiah. LUKE vii. 18—23. MATT. xi. 2—6.

NOW the disciples of John informed him of all these things. And when John had heard in prison the works of Christ (*for their satisfaction rather than his own*) he called two of his disciples to him, and sent them to Jesus, saying unto him, Art thou He that cometh, or are we to expect another ? And when the men were come to him, they said, John the Baptist has sent us to thee, saying, Art thou he that cometh, or are we to expect another ?—Now in that very hour he cured many of their diseases and plagues, and of evil spirits, and bestowed sight on many that were blind. And Jesus answering, said unto them, Go and relate to John the things which you have seen and heard ; that the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised : and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And, happy is he that is not scandalized at me.

REFLECTIONS.

WE have here in John the Baptist a very edifying instance of a most candid and pious temper. How solicitous was he to remove those scruples from the minds of his disciples which, perhaps, their excessive fondness for him might have occasioned ? He wisely sends them to converse with Jesus themselves : and surely they who most accurately inquire into the credentials he brings will be most effectually convinced and impressed by them. Let us, when tempted to doubt of the truth of Christianity, recollect the various and unanswerable proofs of it, which are summed up in these comprehensive words ; arising from the miracles and character of our Redeemer, and the prophetic testimony that was borne to him. Let us particularly rejoice that *the poor have the gospel preached* ; and that the blessings of it are offered to enrich the souls of those whose bodily necessities we often pity, without having it in our power to relieve them.

And, since our Lord pronounces a blessing upon those *that shall not be offended in him*, let us consider what those things are, in the doctrine or circumstances of Christ, which have proved the most dangerous stumbling-blocks, and endeavour to fortify our souls against those temptations which may arise from them. So *the trial of that faith which is a much more valuable treasure than gold which perishes though tried in the fire, may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory*; and we, on the whole, may be advanced in our way by incidents which at first threatened to turn us entirely out of it; as the faith of these disciples of John, must surely be confirmed by those doubts which they had for a while entertained.

SECTION LVIII.

Jesus discourses with the multitude concerning John, and complains of the perverseness of that generation. LUKE vii. 24—35. MATT. xi. 7—19.

NOW when the messengers of John were gone away, Jesus began to speak unto the multitude concerning John, *and to inquire why they had formerly flocked after him*, saying, What went you out into the wilderness to behold? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out to see? a man dressed in soft garments? Behold, they that wear a splendid dress, and live luxuriously, are in royal palaces. But, What did you go out to see? a prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. For this is the person of whom it is written (*Mal. iii. 1.*) “Behold I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.” I assuredly say unto you, among those that have been born of women, there hath not arisen a prophet greater than John the Baptist: nevertheless, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

And all the people hearing him, and even the publicans, justified God, *and testified their approbation*, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees, and doctors of the law, rejected the counsel of God to them, not being baptized by him. And from the days of John the Baptist, even to the present time, the kingdom of heaven is attacked with violence, and the violent seize it. For till the time of John, all the prophets prophesied, and the law of Moses was the only revelation of God's will; but John opened a more perfect dispensation. And if you will receive it from me, this is Elijah who was to come. (*Mal. iv. 5, 6.*) He that hath ears to hear, let him hear it.

And the Lord further said, To what then shall I compare the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like little children, sitting in the market-place, and calling out to their companions, and saying, we have piped to you, and you have not danced; we have mourned to you, and you have not lamented, for John the Baptist came, neither eating bread, nor drinking wine; and you say, He has a devil: On the other hand, the Son of man is come, eating and

drinking; and you say, Behold, a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom has been justified by all her children.

REFLECTIONS.

How happy would it be, if we could learn to correct the natural inconsistencies of our temper and conduct by wise reflections and considerations! How much more improving would our attendance on the ministrations of God's servants be, were we seriously to ask ourselves to what purpose we attended. It ought surely to be followed with such considerations, since it is intended to lead us to the kingdom of heaven: a glorious prize! too glorious to be obtained by faint wishes and inactive desires. There is a sense in which it still suffers violence: and how sad is the degeneracy of our natures, that we should exert so little warmth in such a pursuit, and so much for every trifle! Instead of that holy ardour with which men should *press into it*, they fold their hands in their bosoms, and lose themselves in soft luxurious dreams, till the precious opportunity is for ever gone. May divine grace display the crowns and palms of victory before our eyes, in so awakening a manner, that we may joyfully *seize them*, whatever obstacles may lie in our way, whatever must be done, or whatever must be borne to secure them!

Let us not, as we love our own souls, through a proud self-sufficiency *reject the gracious counsels of God* which are addressed to us, lest we should be another day condemned by *publicans and sinners*. Divine providence and grace are using a variety of methods with us: let not our perverseness and folly, like that of the *Jews*, frustrate them all; but rather let us shew ourselves *the children of wisdom*, by falling in with its measures and improving as well as applauding them.

SECTION LIX.

Our Lord laments over the impenitent cities of Galilee, acknowledges the divine sovereignty, and invites sinners to come to him. MATT. xi. 20, &c.

- 20 **T**HEN he began to upbraid the cities in which most of his miracles had been wrought, because they did not repent.
- 21 Wo unto thee, O Chorazin! wo unto thee, O Bethsaida! for if the miracles which have been wrought in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth,
- 22 and ashes. Wherefore I say unto you, the condition of Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, shall be more tolerable than yours.
- 23 And thou, O Capernaum, who hast been exalted even to heaven shalt be brought down to hell: for if the miracles which have been wrought in thee, had been performed in Sodom, it would have
- 24 continued even to this day. Wherefore I say unto you, That the condition of the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, shall be more tolerable than yours.

- 25 At that time Jesus took occasion to say, I ascribe glory to thee,
 O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these
 things from wise and understanding persons, and hast revealed
 26 them to infants. Be it so, O Father, since such is thy pleasure.
 27 All things are delivered unto me by my Father ; and no one *fully*
 knows the Son, but the Father ; neither does any *truly* know the
 Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son is pleased to reveal
 28 him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy burdened,
 29 and I will ease you. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me,
 for I am meek and lowly in heart ; and you shall find refreshment
 30 to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

REFLECTIONS.

What can we imagine more dreadful than the guilt and condemnation of those who hear the gospel only to despise it ! How can we read the doom of *Chorazin*, *Bethsaida*, and *Caphernaum*, without trembling for ourselves, lest we should incur the like sentence ! Such have been our religious advantages, and opportunities, that, like them, we have indeed been *lifted up to heaven* : The Lord grant that we may not, by our misimprovement and disobedience, be cast down to the lowest hell ! That Tyre and Sidon, and even Sodom and Gomorrah, may not at last rise up in judgment against us, and call down on our heads a punishment more intolerable than that which has fallen upon them, or which they must even then feel !

Our vain curiosity may perhaps be ready to ask, Why were these advantages given to them that abused them, rather than to those who would have improved them better ? But let us impose upon our minds a reverential silence ; since the great Lord of heaven and earth *giveth not an account of any of his matters*. It is so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight ! Still we see the gospel hid from many who are esteemed the wisest and most prudent of mankind ; and, blessed be God, we still see it revealed to some, who, in comparison of them, are but *babes*. Let not this offend us ; but rather taking our notions from the word of God, let us learn to honour these *babes* as possessed of the truest wisdom, and adore the riches of divine grace, if we are in their number, while many of superior capacities are left to *stumble at this stone* till they fall into final ruin. Whatever objections are brought against *Christ* and *his ways*, may we ever adhere to them, since all things are delivered to him by the Father ! From him therefore may we seek the true knowledge of God, as ever we desire everlasting life ! We have all our burdens of sin and of sorrow ! While we labour under them, let us with pleasure hear the gentle and melodious voice of a Redeemer, thus kindly inviting us to come unto him, that we may *find rest to our souls*. Let us with pleasure subject ourselves to him, and go on in our holy course with that improvement and cheerfulness which become those who learn by their own daily experience that *his commandments are not grievous*, and feel that *his yoke is easy, and his burden is light*.

SECTION LX.

Jesus dines at a Pharisee's house, and vindicates the woman who anointed his feet there. LUKE vii. 36, &c.

36 **A**ND one of the Pharisees invited him to eat with him : and
 37 entering into the house of the Pharisee, he sat down to ta-
 38 ble. And, behold, a woman in that city who had been a *great*
 39 sinner, when she knew that he sat at meat in the Pharisee's house,
 40 brought an alabaster vessel of perfumed ointment. And standing
 41 *by the couch behind him*, at his feet*, she began to water his feet
 42 with a shower of tears ; and wiped them with the tresses of her
 43 hair, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the perfumed
 44 balsam.
 45 Now the Pharisee who had invited him, observing *this*, said
 46 within himself, This man if he were a prophet, would have known
 47 who and what kind of woman this is that touched him ; for she is
 48 a *scandalous* sinner. And Jesus, in reply, said to him, Simon,
 49 I have something to say to thee. And he says, O Teacher, say
 50 *it freely*. Then Jesus delivered this parable : A certain creditor
 had two debtors ; one owed *him* five hundred pence†, and the
 other fifty : Now as they had not any thing to pay, he freely for-
 gave them both ; say, therefore, which of them would love him
 most ? And Simon replied, and said, I suppose that he to whom
 he forgave most. And Jesus said to him, thou hast judged right-
 ly. And turning to the woman, he said to Simon, Thou seest
 this woman. I came into thine house, [and] thou didst not give
 me any water to *wash* my feet ; but she has watered my feet with
 tears, and wiped them with the tresses of her hair. Thou didst
 not give me *the usual respect* of a kiss ; but she ever since she
 came in, has not ceased to kiss my feet. Thou didst not anoint my
 head with oil ‡ ; but she has anointed my feet with precious oint-
 ment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her many sins are forgiven ;
 therefore she hath loved much : whereas he to whom little is
 forgiven loveth *but* little. And he says to her, thy sins are for-
 given. And they who were at table with him, began to say with-
 in themselves, Who is this that even forgiveth sins ? But he said
 to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee ; go thy way in peace.

REFLECTIONS.

How joyful an assurance must this [have been] to a soul thus bow-
 ed down and humbled in the very dust under a sense of sin ! How
 light did the reproaches of men sit upon her when she heard these
 reviving words from the mouth of the great Saviour, who alone had
 authority to pronounce them ! Our hearts surely upbraid us with ma-

* They did not sit as we do at meals, but used the recumbent posture.

† The Denarii, or Roman pence, were each in value about 7 1-2 of our money.

‡ These were the usual ceremonies on the reception of guests.

ny and aggravated sins ; but we hear the tidings of pardon : let us gladly embrace it ; and acknowledging that not *five hundred pence*, nor even *ten thousand talents*, are sufficient to express the greatness of our debt, let us retain the remembrance of it, even when we hope that God has forgiven it ; and let us labour, that the tenderness of our love, the warmth of our zeal, and the steadiness of our obedience, may in some measure be proportionable to it : and, blessed Jesus, how distinguished must they then be !

Let us with humble pleasure approach this compassionate *Friend of sinners* ; who, though in one sense separate from them, yet thus freely and graciously encouraged *the chief of them* to apply to him, though he well knew that condescension would expose him to the censure of the self-conceited Pharisees. May God preserve us from that arrogant *confidence in our own righteousness*, which, while it leads us to *despise some*, perhaps much dearer to him than ourselves, would proportionably sink our value for the Saviour, and our love to him ! Let the candour with which Christ accepted this invitation, and the gentleness and prudence with which he behaved at this ensnaring entertainment, teach us to mingle the *wisdom of the serpent* with the *innocence and sweetness of the dove* ; and neither absolutely to refuse all favours, nor severely to resent all neglects, from those whose friendship might at best be very dubious, and their intimacy by no means safe. To conclude ; let us avoid that very ill temper which this Pharisee shewed in upbraiding this poor, humble penitent with the scandals of her former life. Where we have reason to believe that sin has been lamented and forsaken, and consequently that God has forgiven it, let us cheerfully receive those whom our holy Master has not rejected ; and if the remembrance of former irregularities cannot be entirely lost, let it only engage us to magnify the riches of divine grace towards such persons, and to rejoice with them in the display of it.

SECTION LXI.

Our Lord, attended by some pious women, casts out a demon, vindicates himself from a blasphemous charge of the Pharisees, and warns them of the unpardonable sin. LUKE viii. 1—3. xi. 14, 15, 17—23. MATT. xii. 22—32. MARK iii. 22—30.

NOW it came to pass afterwards, that he travelled through every city and village, preaching and publishing the glad-tidings of the kingdom of God ; and the twelve apostles were with him. And *some women also*, who had been cured of evil spirits and illnesses ; *particularly Mary*, who was called *Magdalene**, out of whom had been cast seven demons ; and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, a steward of king Herod, and Susannah, and many other *women*, who assisted him with their possessions.

* From *Magdala*, the place of her residence. There is no proof that she was the person mentioned § 60. [Her being possessed of demons is no evidence of her infamous character. See Dr. Lardner's Letter to Jonas Hanway, Esq. on the impropriety of the term "Magdalen-house." Ed.]

Then there was brought to him one possessed by a demon, *both* blind and dumb, and he cured him; so that it came to pass, when the demon was gone out, *that* the blind and dumb *person* both spake and saw. And all the people were astonished, and said, Is not this the son of David? But the Pharisees and the Scribes, who came down from Jerusalem, hearing this, said, This man is *himself* possessed by Beelzebub, and does not cast out demons but by Beelzebub, the prince or chief of the demons.—And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, called them to him, and said to them, in parabolical expressions, How can Satan cast out Satan? Every kingdom divided against itself cannot subsist, *but* is brought to utter desolation; and every city or family divided against itself shall not stand, *but* falleth into ruin. And *therefore* if Satan rise up against himself, and cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom subsist? He cannot stand, but has a *speedy* period. *Therefore* because you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebub, *you must appear to have been guilty of the most extravagant absurdity.* And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your own children expel them? *who practice exorcisms*, and are approved by you?* Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the finger or the Spirit of God, then undoubtedly the kingdom of God is come unto you. Otherwise, how can any one enter into the house of a strong man and plunder his goods, unless he first bind the strong man? and then he may plunder his house.—When a strong man completely armed guards his palace, his goods are in peace; but when one stronger than he invades and conquers him, he takes away all his complete armory in which he placed his confidence, and distributes his spoils.

He that is not with me is against me; and he that does not gather with me is scattering abroad: *much more criminal then must those be who with deliberate malice oppose my cause.* Therefore verily I say unto you, all other sins shall be forgiven unto the children of men, and *even all* blasphemies with which they shall blaspheme; but the blasphemy against the Spirit of God, *in this most glorious dispensation of it*, shall not be forgiven to men. And whosoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall *maliciously* speak against the Holy Spirit†, it shall never be forgiven him, either in this world or in that *which is* to come, but he is obnoxious to eternal damnation. *This solemn admonition he gave them, because they had said, He hath an unclean spirit.*

REFLECTIONS.

How condescending was the conduct of the blessed Jesus while he dwelt among us! Though he was *Lord of all*, he not only waved

* For a proof of this fact, [that the disciples of the Pharisees practised exorcisms] see *Acts* xix. 13. *Mark* ix. 38. *Luke* ix. 49. Also *Joseph. Antiq.* 1. 8. chap. 2. § 5.

† When the grand dispensation of it shall open, imputing his glorious works of divine power and goodness to a diabolical operation. See *Whitby*.

the pompous manner of subsisting by continued miracles, but likewise declined to dwell with the rich and the great, with whom he could easily have secured to himself a constant abode. He chose a laborious, itinerant course, and subsisted chiefly on the bounty of a few *pious women*, whose company and friendship he did not despise. That subsistence was most pleasing to him which was the greatest testimony of the respect and affection of his hearers, and at the same time gave the greatest opportunity to testify his own humility and self-denial, and to pursue his schemes for public usefulness. So may his followers, and especially his ministers, always judge ! And may all the *great things* they seek for themselves be such as lie on the other side of the grave, and are to be enjoyed in the presence of our glorified Master !

We have seen another *triumph of Christ* over the *evil spirit*, another of those glorious and delightful instances in which the great *Captain of our salvation*, with superior strength, bound the strong man, and *spoiled his goods*. May the victory still be carried on to perfection ! May his *merciful alarms* break that dangerous and fatal peace in which the *slaves of Satan* are for a while detained, that he may with greater advantage, and greater terror, plunge them into final and eternal ruin ! And, in such a contest, may we abhor *neutrality* ! With pleasure and zeal let us *lie* ourselves under the *Redeemer's banners*, that we may share his *trophies* ! And, while others are throwing away their time, their labour, and their souls, may we, by *gathering with him*, secure to ourselves *everlasting riches* !

We must surely be astonished to hear of that perverse and malignant interpretation which these wretches put on such convincing miracles ; and it must move our indignation to see the *Son of God* maliciously charged as an *associate with Satan*. If they have thus called the Master of the house *Beelzebub*, how much more those of his household ? Let us learn to imitate that meekness of wisdom with which the blessed Jesus pursues his vindication. Oh that his followers had ever traced it ! Yea, I had almost said, Oh that they had learned, even from the union of confederate enemies, the danger of that house or kingdom which is unnaturally divided against itself !

It is matter of great thankfulness thus expressly to hear that *every other sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven* ; but awful to think that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is excepted. Let those, who, while they cannot deny the facts of Christianity, despise and oppose its doctrines, tremble to think how near they approach to the boundaries of this sin, which is perhaps more obscurely described than we may more cautiously avoid all such approaches. But let not the humble soul, that trembles at God's word, meditate terror to itself from such a passage ; which, when viewed in its due connection, cannot, with any shadow of reason, be thought to belong to any who do not obstinately reject the gospel, and maliciously oppose it, when made known to them with its fullest evidence.

SECTION LXII.

The danger of vain and sinful words : the blessedness of keeping the word of God. MATT. xii. 33—37. LUKE xi. 37, 28.

JESUS enforced his admonition to the censorious Pharisees, saying, Either make the tree good and its fruit also good, or else make and allow the tree to be corrupt, and its fruit also corrupt : for the tree is known by the fruit it produces. O ye brood of vipers, how can ye who are so wicked yourselves, speak good things ? for the mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart produces good things ; and a wicked man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil things. But I declare unto you, that in the day of judgment men shall give account for every unprofitable word which they shall speak : For by thy words as well as thy actions thou shalt be justified, or by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

And while he was speaking these things a certain woman lifting up her voice from amidst the crowd, said unto him, Happy is the womb that bare thee, and the breasts which thou didst suck. But he replied, Nay, rather happy are they who hear the word of God and keep it.

REFLECTIONS.

Whose heart does not echo back the exclamation of this pious woman ? Yet who does not too frequently forget that weighty and important answer which succeeded it ? Let us not only hear, but keep the word of Christ ; and we shall thus be happy in a nearer union with him than ever could arise from any natural relation to him, and shall ere long have opportunities of more noble and more delightful converse with him than those with which the virgin Mary herself was honoured during the time of his abode on earth.

Let us especially attend to those instructions we have here received, and judge of ourselves by our fruits ; never flattering ourselves that our hearts are good, if our lives are abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate. And in particular let us remember that not our actions only, but the fruits of our lips, are to be brought into the solemn account which we must give to the great Judge of all the earth ; and that the day is coming when all our idle and unprofitable talk, which has proceeded from the evil treasure of a depraved heart, will undergo a strict examination, and we must answer not for our actions only, but shall be justified or condemned by our words. And, if foolish and wicked speeches are to be accounted for in the day of judgment, let us set a watch on the door of our lips to prevent them ; and labour daily to use our tongue so that it may indeed be, as it is in scripture called, our glory.

For that purpose let it be our great care to lay up a good treasure of Christian knowledge and experience in our hearts ; that while too many are poisoning those that are round about them with erroneous principles and vicious discourses, the opening of our lips may be of righteous things ; and we may still be ready, upon all proper occasions,

with freedom, variety, and spirit, to *bring forth good and profitable things from the good treasure of our hearts*; which may be *edifying* unto those that hear us, and may go from one heart to another. So will the Lord himself *hearken* with pleasure unto what we *speak*, and exactly record it in the *book of remembrance* that is *written before him*; and, producing it at last to our public honour, will own us for *his* in the day when he *makes up his jewels*.

SECTION LXIII.

The perverseness of the Pharisees in asking a further sign. The parable of the relaxing demoniac. MATT. xii. 38—45. LUKE xii. 16, 24—26, 29—32.

THEN some of the Scribes and Pharisees answered him, and, with a view to try him, demanded of him a sign from heaven, saying, Master we would see a *more convincing* sign from thee. But when the multitude was gathered in a crowd about him, he answered and said unto them, This is an evil and adulterous * generation that still seeks after a further sign: but no such sign shall be given them, unless it be that which may be called the sign of the prophet Jonah, because it bears a resemblance to that miraculous occurrence. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also shall the Son of man be to this generation: for as Jonah was three days and three nights † in the belly of the great fish, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, and on the third day shall burst the bands of death. And the men of Ninevah shall rise up in the final judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold one greater than Jonah is here. The queen of Sheba also in the south country shall rise up in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it; since she came from the extreme boundaries of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold one greater than Solomon is here.

An unclean spirit, when he has gone out of a man, goes about through dry and desert places, seeking rest, and finding none. Then he saith, I will return to my dwelling from whence I came out: and when he comes he finds it empty of any better guest, swept and adorned to receive him. Then he goes and associates with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in they dwell there; so that the last condition of that man is worse than the former. Thus also will it be to this wicked generation.

* A spurious race, degenerated from the piety of their ancestors.

† The Easterns reckoned any part of a day of 24 hours, for a whole day. 1 Kings xx. 29. 2 Chron. x. 5, 12. Luke ii. 21.—It is not said in the Old Testament, that Jonah was swallowed by a *Whale*. As the gullet of a whale is known to be small, we may suppose it to have been some other large fish. The Hebrew word is general.

‡ An allusion to the common notion that evil demons had their haunts in deserts.—Perhaps the circumstances here mentioned might be merely parabolical and ornamental.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us to whom the revelation of the *gospel* is so clearly made, *fear* lest these dreadful things should come upon us, and the abuse of our advantages should render us an easy prey to *Satan*, and a fit habitation for the *powers of darkness*. Let those particularly fear it, who, having been brought to some serious impressions and some external reformation, are tempted to a *relapse* into former vices, which would render their *latter end* far worse than their *beginning*. God has permitted some such awful instances to occur; and unhappy wretches, perhaps some of them *the children of religious parents* too, who were once *not far from the kingdom of God*, have so abandoned every principle of religion, and ever sentiment of wisdom and virtue, that it seems as if *seven devils* had possessed them, and were driving them headlong to destruction.

May we, instead of *demanding further evidences of Christianity* than the wisdom of God has seen fit to give us, make it our care to *hear and obey* and diligently improve the light we have received! May we be brought to a sincere and lasting repentance by the preaching of Christ, and his apostles, lest the *Ninevites rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us*! May we own the superior wisdom of this *Divine Teacher*, this better *Solomon*; and say, as the *queen of Sheba* to the Jewish prince, (1 Kings x. 8.) *Happy are these thy servants, who stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom!* for thou *speakest as never man spake*; and in thee all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are *hid*. But oh, how many are curious to know what little concerns them, and are fond of improving their own wit, and trying that of others, by *hard questions*, while the far more obvious and important points of wisdom are neglected as beneath their regard; as if every thing were more necessary than being *wise to salvation*! We need not travel to *distant climates* to learn this heavenly philosophy; no, it is *nigh us, even in our mouth*; and we are, on that account, so much the more *inexcusable*, if it be not also *in our heart*.

SECTION LXIV.

Light not to be concealed. The obedient disciples of Christ dearer to him than the nearest relations. LUKE xi. 33—36. viii. 19—21.

MATT. xii. 46, &c. MARK iii. 31, &c.

NO man having lighted a lamp puts it in a bye-place, or under a bushel, but on a stand, that they who come in may see the lustre it gives. The eye is the lamp of the body: if thine eye therefore be clear, thy whole body also will be enlightened; but if [thine eye] be distempered, thy whole body also will be darkened. See to it therefore lest that which is the light in thee be darkness. For if thy whole body be enlightened, having no part dark, *through distemper or prejudice* (being thus all enlightened) it will be as when a lamp lights thee by its sprightly lustre, and thou goest with security and pleasure.

And as he was yet speaking *these things* to the people, behold there then came unto him his mother and his brethren (*or near kinsmen*) who standing without, sent to him to call him away from so dangerous a situation; and for this end desired to speak with him. [For] the multitude sat about him, and they could not come at him on account of the crowd. Therefore one of the people said unto him, Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, inquiring for thee, and desiring to see and speak with thee. But he answered and said to him that told him, Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And looking round on them that were sitting about him, and stretching out his hand towards his disciples, he said, Behold my mother and my brethren here. For these that hear the word of God and practise it are considered by me as my mother and my brethren; and whosoever shall do the will of God, my Heavenly Father, this very person is regarded by me as my brother, or my sister, or my mother.

REFLECTIONS.

To suppose that our Lord intended to put any slight on his mother would be very absurd: He only took this opportunity of expressing his affection to his obedient disciples in a peculiarly endearing manner, which could not but be a great comfort to them; and would be, to the pious women who sat near him, a rich equivalent for all the fatigue and expense which their zeal for him occasioned. Possibly it might also be intended as an awful intimation to some of his near relatives, to take heed how they indulged that unbelief which had prevailed in their minds: for in this case the nearness of their relation to Christ according to the flesh, would be no advantage to them, but those that should do his will would be preferred in his esteem before them, and be united to him in a relation that should never be dissolved*.

So may it be our care to *do the will of God*, that we may be thus dear to our Redeemer, who ought by so many tender bonds to be dear to us; and who, by such gracious and indulgent declarations as these which we have now been reading, is drawing us as with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love!

Still does the light of his divine instructions shine with the brightest lustre, and diffuse itself around us! Let us open the eyes of our mind with singleness and simplicity to receive it; and make it our care to act according to it. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord, and thus with cheerfulness shall we reap the fruit of a well informed mind and a well regulated life. May we be delivered from all those false maxims which would darken our hearts amidst all this meridian lustre, and turn our boasted light into darkness! Would to God there were not renewed instances of this kind continually occurring among us; and that we did not daily meet with persons whose pretended wisdom teaches them to forget or despise the gospel, and so serves only to amuse their eyes, while it leads their feet to the chambers of death!

* As the author's reflections in this section are unusually short, and this part of the sacred history is scarcely noticed, the above, which is extracted from the notes, is inserted by the Editor.

SECTION LXV.

Christ delivers the parable of the Sower, and assigns the reason of his speaking in parables. MATT. XIII. 1—17. MARK. IV. 1—12 LUKE VIII. 4—10.

ON that day Jesus, going out of the house, sat down by the side of the sea, and began again to teach there; and *such* great multitudes were gathered together, *who* came from every city to hear him, that, entering into a ship he sat down *on it* in the sea, and the whole multitude stood by the sea upon the shore. And he spake a parable concerning a Sower; and likewise taught them many other things in parables. And in the beginning of his teaching *this day* he said to them, Harken: behold a sower went forth to sow his seed. And it happened *that*, while he was sowing, some of the seed fell by the way side, and it was trodden under foot, or the birds of the air came and devoured it. And some fell on stony soil, upon a rock, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun shone *hot upon it*, it was scorched and withered away as soon as it was sprung up, because it had no root, and wanted moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it, and *so* it yielded no fruit. And the rest fell on good ground, which *being well nourished* grew up and increased, and produced fruit; some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold. And when he had said these things, he cried out and said unto them, He that hath ears to hear let him hear.

And when he was alone, *having parted with the multitude, the rest of* his disciples, with the twelve, came and asked him concerning the parable; saying, What may this parable be? and why dost thou speak to them in parables? And he replying, said unto them, Because *though it is granted to you whose hearts are open to receive the truth,* to know the mysteries of the kingdom, yet it is not granted to others *who are prejudiced against them*; but to them that are without, all these things are involved in parables. For to every one that hath any talent and improves it, shall be given more, and he shall have abundance; but even that which he hath shall be taken away from him who hath not: *from the slothful creature, who acts like one who hath not any thing to improve.* Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing, they see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. *So that it is in just displeasure that I speak to them in this obscure language, that what has been their crime may be their punishment:* that seeing my miracles they may see the outward act, but not perceive the evidence arising from them; and hearing my discourses, they may hear the sound but not understand their true meaning; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.—And thus in them is the prophecy of Isaiah fulfilled (vi. 9, 10.) which saith, “By hearing you shall hear, but shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, but you shall not perceive. For the heart of this people is grown stiff with fatness, and they hear with heavy ears, and draw up their eyes as if half asleep, lest at any

time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them*.”

But happy are your eyes, because they see ; and your ears because they hear : for verily I say unto you, That many prophets have desired to see the things which you see, and did not see them ; and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us hear with fear and trembling these awful declarations from the lips of the compassionate Jesus himself. Here were crowds about Christ, who indulged such prejudices, and attended with such perverse dispositions, that in righteous judgment he took an obscurer method of preaching to them, and finally left many of them under darkness, and impenitency to die in their sins.

Let us take heed lest the bounties of Divine Providence should be thus abused by us, as a means of casting us into a stupid insensibility of the hand and voice of the blessed God : or we may otherwise have ground to fear lest he should leave us to our own delusions, and give us up to the lusts of our own hearts. And then the privilege of ordinances, and of the most awakening providential dispensations, will be vain ; seeing we shall see, and not perceive ; and hearing we shall hear, and not understand. It is our peculiar happiness under the gospel that we see and hear what prophets and princes, and saints of old, desired to see and hear, but were not favoured with it. Let us be thankful for our privilege, and improve it well ; lest a neglected gospel by the righteous judgment of God be taken away, and our abused seasons of grace, by one method of divine displeasure or other, be brought to a speedy period. But if by grace it is given to us to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, let us learn a thankfulness in some measure proportionable to the corrupt prejudices which have been overborne, and the important blessings which are secured to us.

SECTION LXVI.

Our Lord explains to his disciples the parable of the Sower, and exhorts them to improve their gifts. MARK iv. 13—25. MATT. xiii. 18—22. LUKE viii. 11—18.

AND, the apostles having asked Jesus the meaning of the parable of the Sower, He said unto them, Know ye not this parable ? How then will ye understand all my other parables ? Hear ye therefore, according to your desire, the explication of the parable of the Sower. Now the meaning of it is this. The seed which the sower soweth is the word of God. And these are they by the way-side, where the

* It is to be considered that the above passage was delivered with a particular reference to the Scribes and Pharisees, who had so vilely blasphemed our Lord this very morning ; and probably they had gathered a company of their associates to ensnare him.

word is *no sooner sown*, but *the effect is lost*: when any one hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not, then Satan, that wicked one, comes immediately and catches away the word that was sown in his heart, lest they *who have heard* should believe and be saved. This *I say* is he that received the seed by the way-side.—And in like manner, these are they who received the seed in stony soil or on a rock; who having heard the word, *the message of the gospel*, immediately receive it with joy; but have no root in themselves, and so believe and endure but for a while; and afterwards in a time of trial, when oppression or persecution arises, on account of the word, they are presently offended, and apostatise.—And these are they that received seed among thorns; *even such as hear the word, but as soon as they have heard it, go out of the assembly*, and the cares of this world, and the delusion of riches, or the pleasures of *this* life, or the desires of other things, enter *into their minds*, and choke the word, and *so it becomes unfruitful*: yea, they *themselves* are choked *as it were, with those incumbrances*, and bring no fruit to perfection.—And these are they *who were said to have received the seed into good ground*; *even such as hear the word, and understand, and receive it, and retain it in an honest and good heart, bringing forth fruit with patience, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold.*

And he said *further* to them, Is a lamp brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not to be set on a stand? No man of common sense, having lighted a lamp, covers it with a vessel, or puts it under a couch; but sets it upon a stand, that all they who enter in may see the light. *Be not then backward to communicate to others what you receive from me*; for nothing is secret which shall not be revealed, nor hid which shall not be made known and published. If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear. And he said *also* to them, Take heed therefore what and how you hear. The measure with which you mete *to others*, shall be used to you; and to you that *attentively* hear, more shall be given; for (*as was before said*) to him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath, or seemeth to have.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us apply to ourselves this charge of our blessed Redeemer, and *take heed how we hear*. Especially let us be very careful that we *deafuse not him that now speaks to us from heaven*; and remember the authority which his exaltation there gives to the words which he spake in the days of his flesh. Let us attentively hear the parable of *the sower*, and its interpretation. Still is Christ, by his word and his ministers, sowing among us *the good seed*. Still is the great enemy of souls labouring to snatch it away. Let us endeavour to understand, that we may retain it; and to retain, that we may practise it. Still do *the cares of this world* press us; still do its pleasures solicit us; still do *our lusts war in our members*; and all unite their efforts to prevent our fruitfulness in good works: but let us remember, that *with having our fruit unto holiness, everlasting life is connected as the end*; and that *in due season we shall reap if we faint not*.

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Let us therefore be concerned that the seed may take *deep root* in our minds, that we may not rest in any superficial impression on the passions ; but, feeling the energy of that living principle, may flourish under the circumstances which wither others, and may in due time be gathered as God's *wheat into his garner*. Nor let us repine if we now go forth weeping, bearing this precious seed, while we have such a hope of coming again rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us.

SECTION LXVII.

The parable of the Tares in the field, explained to the disciples. MATT. xiii. 24—30. 36—43.

- 24 **W**HEN our Lord was teaching the multitude from the ship, he proposed another parable to them, saying ; The kingdom of heaven or the success of the gospel dispensation, may be compared to that which happened to a man who had sown good seed in
 25 his ground : but while the men slept, his enemy came and sowed
 26 tares* among the wheat, and went away. But when the blade was sprung up and produced fruit, then the tares also appeared.
 27 And the servants of the proprietor of the estate came and said to him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field ? whence then
 28 hath it tares ? And he said unto them, Some malicious person has done this. And the servants said to him, Wilt thou then have
 29 us go and gather them up ? But he said, No ; lest while you gather up the tares, you should root up the wheat also with them.
 30 Permit both to grow together till the harvest ; and in the time of the harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles, that they may be burnt ; but gather ye the wheat into my barn.
 36 Then Jesus (after he had spoken some other parables) having dismissed the multitude, went into an house ; and his disciples came to him saying, Explain to us the parable of the tares in the
 37 field. And he answered and said unto them, He that sowed the good seed is the Son of Man : The field is the world : The good seed are the children of the kingdom ; my true disciples : The
 38 tares are wicked men, the children of the wicked one : The enemy that sowed them is the devil : The harvest is the end of the world ;
 39 and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered together and burnt in the fire, so shall it be at the end of this
 40 world. The Son of man shall then send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things which have been
 41 an offence to others, even all those that practise iniquity ; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire : there shall be lamentation and
 42 gnashing of teeth, in the height of anguish, rage, and despair. Then shall the righteous shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their
 43 Father. Every one who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

* *ζιζανια* imports something different from what we call tares.— [Doubtless some noxious weed.]

REFLECTIONS.

Oh that these important instructions might, as it were, be ever sounding in our ears ! It is matter of great thankfulness that this earth, which might have been abandoned by God as a barren wilderness, is cultivated as *his field*, and that any *good seed* is to be found in it ; but grievous to think how many *tares* are intermingled, so as almost to over-run the ground, and hide the wheat from being seen. Let not a forward zeal prompt us, like these over-officious servants, to think of rooting them out by violence ; but let us wait our master's time, and *be patient till the day of the Lord*. The separation will at length be made ; nor shall one precious grain perish. Awful, important time ! when the angels shall perform their great office with a sagacity too sharp to be eluded, and a power too strong to be resisted ! *Gather not our souls, O Lord, with sinners !* but may they be *bound up in the bundle of life* ! that when *the day cometh which shall burn as an oven*, and when the *wicked like chaff* shall be thrown in to be consumed, we may survey the execution of the divine judgment with awful triumph ; being owned by God as his while he is *making up his jewels*, and *spared by him as his obedient children*. Then shall we not only be spared, but honoured and adorned, and *shine forth like the sun in our Father's kingdom* ; for these *vile bodies shall be fashioned like to the glorious body of our Redeemer*, and our purified and perfected spirits shall be clothed with proportionable lustre, and reflect the complete image of his holiness. Amen.

SECTION LXVIII.

Other parables relating to the speedy progress of the gospel, and its important blessings. MARK iv. 26—34. MATT. xiii. 31—35. 44—53.

AND Jesus further said to the multitude, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should throw seed upon the earth, and should sleep by night, and rise by day, and *without his thought or care*, the seed should spring and increase he knows not how. For the earth spontaneously produces first the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full grain in the ear. But as soon as the fruit is ripe, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest is come. *By such insensible degrees shall the gospel gain ground in the world, and ripen to a harvest of glory.* And then, making a pause, he said, Whereunto *else* shall we compare the kingdom of God ? or with what parable shall we further illustrate it ?

He then proposed another parable to them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field : which indeed, when it is *first sown*, is *one of the least* of all the seeds* that are *cast* in the ground. But when it is *some time sown*, it grows up and becomes greater than all other herbs : yea it becomes a tree, and shoots out great branches, so that the birds of

* Therefore used proverbially for a little thing. We have accounts of its increase in that country, far beyond what is known in ours.

the air may come and lodge in its branches, and harbour under its shadow. So the gospel, small as its beginnings were, shall spread itself through the world.

He also spake another parable to them, to the same purpose. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and covered up in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. All these things Jesus spake to the multitude in parables; and with many other such parables spake he the word unto them as they were able to hear it; and without a parable spake he not to them: that so it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet *Isaiah* (Ps. lxxviii. 2.) "I will open my mouth in parables, I will give vent to dark sayings of old, even things hid from the foundation of the world." And he expounded all these things to his disciples when they were alone with him.

[He then delivered to them the following, recorded only by MATTHEW, xiii. 44—53.]

- 44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hid in a field, which when a man has found, he hides, and for joy of it goes and
 45 sells all that he has and buys that field.—Again, the kingdom of
 46 heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls; who finding one pearl of an exceeding great value, went away, and sold all that
 47 he had, and bought it.—Again, the kingdom of heaven, in the world, is like a net thrown into the sea, which gathered in fishes
 48 of all sorts; which, when it was full, they dragged to the shore, and sitting down, gathered the good into vessels, but threw away
 49 the bad (*the dead and putrid**) : So will it be at the end of the world : when the angels shall come forth, and separate the wicked from among the just; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
 51 Then Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these
 52 things? They say unto him, Yes, Lord. And he said to them, See therefore that you make a good use of them : for every scribe who is disciplined to the kingdom of heaven, is like a housekeeper who
 53 brings forth out of his store, things new and old.—And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence, that evening.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us be concerned to gather up these fragments that nothing may be lost; and to lay them up in our memories and our hearts, that according to our respective stations in life, we may have them ready for use. Let us remember that sometimes the growth of piety in the heart is like that of vegetables in the earth. The seed of the word may for a while seem lost; or when the fruit appears, it may advance and ripen but slowly. Let not ministers therefore too confidently conclude they have laboured in vain, and spent their strength for nought, because the fields are not immediately white to the harvest; but with

* So the word *σάρκα* generally signifies, and seems to allude to the drawing up some dead fish with the living.

believing hope and humble patience let them recommend the seed that they have sown to Him who, by the secret energy of his continued influences, can give at length a sure and plentiful increase.

When Jesus took to himself his great power and reigned, the gospel, which had gained so little ground under his personal ministration, ran, and was greatly glorified, in the hands of the apostles. The grain of mustard-seed shot up and branched forth into a spreading tree, and birds of every wing took shelter there; (oh that there had been none of the ravenous and the obscene kind!) Thus when the Lord shall please to hasten it in his time, a little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation.—Let us pray that the triumphant progress of his kingdom may come. In the mean time let it be our desire that the principles of the gospel may, like a sacred kind of leaven, diffuse themselves through our whole souls; that all our powers and faculties, that all our thoughts and passions, may be, as it were, impregnated and elevated by them. Let us remember the value of the blessings it proposes; and regarding Christ as the *pearl of great price*, and heaven as that immense treasure in which alone we can be for ever rich and happy, let us be willing to *part with all* to secure it, if we are called to such a trial.

It is not enough that we are nominal Christians, or possessed of the common privileges of the church: the day of final separation will come, and the angels employed in the work will not overlook us, but conduct us to the abodes of the righteous or the wicked. Oh that we may not then be cast with abhorrence into the *furnace of fire*! but now seriously realizing to ourselves this awful day, of which our Lord has given such repeated prospects, may we so judge ourselves that we may not then be condemned of him!

SECTION LXIX.

Our Lord's remarkable answer to some disposed to follow him. He stills a mighty tempest. MATT. viii. 18—27. MARK iv. 35, &c. LUKE viii. 22—25. ix. 57, &c.

NOW in the evening of the same day, when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he went into a ship with his disciples, and said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And when they had dismissed the multitude, they took him, just as he was, in the ship. But the following occurrences previously happened.

And first, it came to pass that, as they went in the way, a certain scribe came and said unto him, Lord,* I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus, instead of flattering his expectation of any temporal advantage, saith to him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, yet the Son of man has not a place [of his own] where he may lay his head.—And to another of his disciples, who had for some time attended his discourses, he said, Follow me stedfastly. But he said unto him, Lord, first permit me to go and bury my father. But

LUKE has it, "Master."

Jesus said to him, Follow thou me : leave the dead to bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord I will follow thee ; but permit me first to go and take my leave of them which are at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man having *once* put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

And when he was entered into the ship, his disciples followed him, and they launched forth ; and other little ships were also with him. And as they were sailing he fell asleep ; and behold there came down a violent storm of wind on the lake, and there arose a great agitation in the sea, insomuch that the vessel was covered with the waves, which beat into the ship, so that it was now full of *water*, and they were in extreme danger. And [Jesus] was asleep on a pillow in the stern of the ship. And his disciples came to him and awakened him, saying, Master, Master, is it no concern to thee ? Lord save us ! we are perishing. And he says to them, Why are ye so timorous, O ye of little faith ?* Then rising up he rebuked the winds, and the raging of the water, and said to the sea, Peace, be still : And the wind ceased †, and there was *presently* a great calm. And the men were amazed, and feared exceedingly, saying to each other, What a wonderful person is this, who commandeth the winds and the sea, and they obey him !

REFLECTIONS.

How great and glorious does our blessed Redeemer appear, as having all the elements at his command, and exercising his dominion over *the winds and seas* ! He stills the very tempests when they roar, and *makes the storm a calm*. He silences at once the noise and fury of the tumultuous waves : and, in the midst of its confusion, says to the raging sea, *Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further ; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed*.—Who would not reverence and fear him ! Who would not cheerfully commit themselves to him ! Under such a protection, how courageously may his church ride through every storm, and weather every danger ! Christ is still with her, and she is safe even while he may seem to be sleeping. Blessed Jesus ! that power of thine which here commanded the tempest into a calm, can easily silence all our tumultuous passions, and reduce our souls to that blessed tranquillity in which alone we can be capable of enjoying thee and ourselves.

May we still be applying to Christ with such importunate addresses ; and, sensible how much we need his help, may we cry out, *Lord, save us, or we perish* ! And may it be the language, not of suspicion and terror, but of faith ; of a faith determined at all adventures to adhere to him, whatever dangers are to be encountered, or whatever advantages are to be resigned !

Did his compassion for us, and his desire of our salvation, engage him to submit to such destitute and calamitous circumstances, that when *the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, the Son of man himself had not a place where he might lay that sacred head*

* MARK, ' How is it that ye have no faith ? ' LUKE, ' Where is your faith ? '

† Rested, D.

which with infinite mutual complacency and delight he had so often reposed in the bosom of the Father ! May our zeal and love animate us cheerfully to take our part in his indigence and distress, if he calls us to it ! May no considerations of ease or interest, or even of human friendship, lead us to turn a deaf ear to the calls of duty ; or suffer us, when we once have engaged in his service, to think of deserting it, lest on the whole we should be judged *unfit for the kingdom of God* ! May thy grace, O Lord, animate our souls, that nothing may prevent our *faithfulness unto death*, and so deprive us of that *crown of life* which thy grace has promised to such a character !

SECTION LXX.

Christ dispossesses two demoniacs, and permitting the evil spirits to enter into a herd of swine, is desired to withdraw. MATT. viii. 28, &c. ix. 1. MARK v. 1—21. LUKE viii. 26—40.

AND after they were delivered from the storm, they came over to the other side of the sea of *Tiberias*, and arrived at the country of the *Gadarenes*, adjacent to that of the *Gergesenes*, which is over against *Galilee*. And when he was landed out of the ship, there immediately met him two men * possessed with demons, coming out of sepulchres, exceeding fierce, so that no one could safely pass by that way : [one of these was] a certain man of the city with an unclean spirit, that had been possessed with demons for a long time ; who wore no clothes, nor would abide in any house, but had his dwelling among the tombs ; and no one could confine him even with chains ; for he had often been bound with fetters and chains, yet the chains were broken asunder by him, and the fetters were beaten to pieces ; and no one was able to tame him. And he was always, night and day, upon the mountains and among the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.—And when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and fell down before him and worshipped him ; and crying out with a loud voice, he said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God ? I beseech and adjure thee by God that thou do not torment me. Art thou come hither to torment us before the time ? (for he had already commanded the unclean spirit, *having* said to him *with an air of authority*, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.)†

And Jesus asked the evil spirit that was in him, What is thy name ? And he answered saying, My name is Legion, for we are many ; because a multitude of demons had entered into him. And they earnestly entreated him that he would not send them away out of the country, [*nor*] command them to go into the abyss.

* *Mark* and *Luke* mention only one, who probably was the fiercer of the two ; but this is not inconsistent with *Matthew*.

† LUKE,—“For it had often seized him, and he was bound in chains, and kept in fetters ; and having broke all the bonds, he was driven by the demon into the desert places.” *This passage, which the author introduces here, after the above from MARK, is redundant.*

Now there was there, at a considerable distance from them, on the mountains, a great herd of swine* feeding on the mountain. And all the demons entreated him saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us† to go away to the herd of swine that we may enter into them, and immediately Jesus (*to punish the owners, and to prove the reality of a diabolical agency*) permitted them, and said unto them, Go. And the unclean spirits went out of the man and entered into the herd of swine; and behold the whole herd *grew mad and ran violently down a precipice into the sea, and perished‡ in the waters, being about two thousand.*

And the swine-herds, seeing what was done, fled, and told all the story in the city and country, and what had happened to the demoniacs. And they went out *in crowds* to see what was done. And when they came to Jesus, and saw the demoniac that had the legion, out of whom the demons were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and composed, they were afraid. And they also who had seen *all that passed*, told them *more largely* by what means the demoniac had been recovered, and also concerning the *destruction of the swine.*—And behold the whole city of Gadara came out to meet Jesus; and the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about. And when they saw him, they began to entreat him that he would depart from them out of their coasts; for they were seized with great fear of *some further judgments.* And he went into the ship again, and returned back to the western shore.

And when he was come into the ship, the demoniac, out of whom the demons were departed, entreated him that he might continue with him. Yet Jesus did not permit him, but sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house: go to thy friends at home, and tell them how great things the Lord God has performed for thee, and *how he has had compassion on thee.* And he went away, and began to publish through the whole city, and in Decapolis, what great things Jesus had done for him. And all men were amazed. And Jesus having entered into the ship, passed over the sea of Galilee, and came to his own city of Capernaum, and a great multitude gathered to him, and the people gladly received him; for they were all *impatiently* waiting for him. And he continued *some time* on the sea coast.

REFLECTIONS.

From the remarkable story which is here before us we must surely see the most apparent reason to adore the good providence of God which restrains the malignant spirits of hell from spreading those desolations among beasts and men, which would otherwise quickly turn the earth into a wilderness, or rather into a chaos. But what matter of joy is it to reflect that all their fury and rage is under a divine control, and that they cannot hurt even the meanest animal without permission from above!—The unhappy creature, whose state

* LUKE, "Many swine."—The Jews bred great numbers of them (contrary to their law) to sell to the Gentiles.

† MARK, "Send us."—The cavils against this miracle are equally malicious and weak. [The author vindicates it in a judicious note.]

‡ LUKE, "Were suffocated in the sea."

is here described in such lively colours, is an affecting emblem of those who are in a spiritual sense under the power of *Satan*. Thus do they *break asunder* the bonds of reason and gratitude, and sometimes of authority, and even of shame; and, thus driven on by the frenzy of their lusts and passions, they are so outrageous as to injure others, and to wound themselves. Human attempts to moderate and reform them may be vain; but let us remember that the almighty Saviour has a *voice* which can put this worst kind of demons to flight, and restore those that have been agitated by them to their *right mind*, so as to place them *at his feet* in holy composure, and in calm, rational attention.

We see here a *legion of devils* trembling before the Son of God, confessing his superior power, howling as it were in their chains, and entreating the delay of their torments. And can human pride stand before him, and rebellious mortals triumph over him? Happy souls, that are listed under his banners! They shall share the victories of the great *Captain of their salvation*, and the *God of peace shall bruise Satan under their feet shortly*. But oh, how stupid and how wretched were these *Gadarenes*, who preferred their swine to their souls, and *besought him to depart out of their coasts*, whose presence was their defence and their glory! May divine grace preserve us from a temper like theirs! And may those of us who have ourselves experienced the restoring power of Christ and his gospel, be engaged to adhere to our great Benefactor, and gratefully to devote those powers to his service which he has rescued from dishonour, mischief, and ruin!

SECTION LXXI.

Christ, being entertained at Matthew's house, justifies his conversing with publicans and sinners; and vindicates his disciples. MATT. ix. 10—17. MARK ii. 15—22. LUKE v. 29, &c.

AND *Matthew*, named also *Levi*, who had some time since been called from his office of a *publican*, to attend upon *Christ*, made a great entertainment for him in his own house. And it came to pass that as *Jesus* sat at table, behold a great number of the *publicans* and *sinners*, *being invited*, came, and sat also at the table with *Jesus* and his disciples. And others also were present, for there were many [*who*] followed him. But when their *Scribes* and *Pharisees* saw him eat with *publicans* and *sinners*, they murmured at his disciples, saying, *Why do you eat and drink, and how is it that your master eats and drinks, with publicans and sinners?* And *Jesus*, having heard it, he answered them saying, *They that are in health have no need of the physician, but those that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* But go your way and learn the meaning of that scripture, (*Hos. vi. 6.*) "*I require mercy, and not sacrifice.*"

And as the disciples of *John the Baptist*, and of the *Pharisees*, used often to fast, several of the disciples of *John*, who were now present, come and say unto him, *Whence is it that we, the disciples of John,*

and also of the Pharisees, frequently fast, and make prayers, whereas thy disciples fast not at all, but eat and drink *freely*? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn and fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the *pleasure* of the bridegroom among them they cannot be *expected* to fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast in those days. And, *further to illustrate this*, he spake also a parable to them: No man will of choice sew a piece of new stiff cloth* on an old garment; for [in that case] the new piece that was put in to fill up [the breach] agrees not with the old, but teareth r away from it, and thus the rent is made worse. And no wise man puts new wine into old leathern † bottles, for if he should, the new wine, fermenting, will burst the bottles, and so the wine will be spilt, as well as the bottles destroyed. But new wine must be put into new bottles, and thus both are preserved. And no man who has generally drank old wine will immediately choose new; for he says, The old is better. Judge then how fit it is that I should not oblige my disciples to a new course of severities at once.

REFLECTIONS.

There is no reason to wonder that *Matthew* should gladly embrace so proper an opportunity of introducing other publicans and sinners into the presence of that condescending Saviour, from whom, though he once was numbered among them, he had received *grace* and the *apostleship*. Let us with pleasure observe how ready our blessed Lord was to receive them. Surely, whatever offence the proud Pharisees might take on such an occasion, Jesus will appear peculiarly amiable in such a circle as this. Compassionate Redeemer! thou didst, as the great *Physician of souls*, willingly converse with objects that must have been most hateful to thy pure and holy nature! May we each of us have a due sense of the malignity of sin, that fatal disease of the soul, that we may with a becoming temper apply to Christ for a cure! May we also, like him, be willing to condescend to the meanest and vilest, if it may be the means of winning them over to true religion and happiness! ever preferring *mercy* to *sacrifice*, and choosing rather to govern ourselves by the dictates of a benevolent heart than by the maxims of proud and censorious men.

Christ would not discourage his disciples by over-rigorous institutions; and it is unfit that his religion should be burthened with them. He suits the duties of his people to their circumstances, and kindly proportions their work to their strength, with a tender regard to their weakness, till by degrees they may be fitted for the more difficult and humbling services. From his example, and the whole genius of his gospel, let us learn to make all proper allowances to those about us; that we may teach them, and train them up as *they are able to bear it*; not crushing them under any unnecessary load, nor denying them any indulgence which true friendship will permit us to grant them; lest the good ways of God should be misrepresented, disgraced, and

* The words signify, cloth which has not passed through the Fuller's hands.

† Such only it is well known were then in use. Comp. *Josh. ix. 4, 13. Psal. cxix. 83.*

abandoned, through our imprudent, though well-meaning, severity : a caution to be peculiarly observed in our conduct towards young persons ; and not to be forgotten with respect to those who, like the disciples here in question, are training up for the ministerial office.

SECTION LXXII.

Christ cures a woman by the touch of his garment, raises the daughter of Jairus from the dead, and performs other miracles. MATT. ix, 18—34. MARK v. 22, &c. LUKE viii. 41, &c.

WHEN Jesus was speaking these things to them in Matthew's house, behold there came a certain ruler of the synagogue whose name was Jairus ; and when he saw him, he fell down at his feet and worshipped him, and entreated him to come to his house ; for he had one only daughter, about twelve years old, and she lay at the point of death. And he earnestly entreated him to go immediately, saying, My little daughter is in the last extremity, or perhaps is even now dead : *I beseech thee that thou wouldest come and lay thine hands on her, that she may recover, and I doubt not but she shall live.* And Jesus arose and followed him, and so did his disciples.

Now as he was going, much people followed him, and pressed upon him. And behold a certain woman who had laboured under a flux of blood for twelve years, and had suffered a great deal from many physicians, and spent all that she had upon them, but could not be healed by any, and was not at all the better, but rather grew worse ; having heard of Jesus, came in the crowd behind him, and touched the border (or fringe) of his garment. For she said within herself, If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be recovered. And immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of that distemper.—And Jesus immediately knowing that virtue was gone out of him, by the concurrence of his will, turned about in the crowd, and said, Who has touched my clothes ? And all the rest denying it, Peter, and his disciples that were near him, said unto him, Sir, thou seest that the multitude are crowding around thee, and press thee on every side ; and dost thou say, Who has touched me ? And Jesus said, somebody has touched me on some important design ; for I perceive that a healing virtue is gone out of me. And he looked round about to see her who had done this, and directed his eye towards her. And when the woman saw that she was not concealed, knowing what a work was wrought in her, she came fearful and trembling ; and falling down before him, she told him all the truth, and declared to him before all the people, for what reason she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. And Jesus said unto her, Daughter, take courage, thy faith has made thee well ; go in peace, and be free from thy distemper. And the woman was well from that hour.

While he was yet speaking, some messengers came from the house of the ruler of the synagogue, Jairus, and they said unto him, Thy daughter is dead ! why therefore dost thou trouble the Master any

further? Trouble him not. But as soon as Jesus heard the word which was spoken, he says to the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe, and she shall still be recovered. And when he came into the ruler's house, he permitted none to follow him, except Peter and James, and John the brother of James, [with] the father and mother of the deceased maiden. And all wept and lamented her. And [when] he saw the tumult, and the people who wept and cried aloud, and also the flute-players * making a mournful noise † he says to them, Retire, and make way. Why do you lament and make this disturbance? The damsel is not dead, but is asleep. And they derided him, well knowing that she was dead. But when he had put them all out, he takes the father and mother of the maiden, and those that were with him, and enters in where the damsel lay. And he took hold of her hand, and called, saying to her (*in Syriac*) Talitha cumi; which, being translated, signifies, Maiden (I say unto thee) rise up. And presently her spirit came back again, and she arose and walked; for she was twelve years old. And he ordered that something should be given her to eat.—And her parents, and they all were exceedingly astonished; but Jesus strictly charged them that they should tell no man what was done. *But it was soon published*; and the fame of it went abroad into all that country. And when Jesus passed on from thence, two blind men followed him, crying out and saying, O thou Son of David, have compassion on us. And when he was come into the house *to which he was going*, the blind men came unto him; and Jesus says to them, Do you believe that I am able to do this? They say unto him, Yes, Lord. Then he touched their eyes and said, Be it unto you according to your faith. And their eyes were immediately opened. And Jesus gave them a strict charge that they should tell no man. But when they were gone out, they spread his fame over all that country.—And as they went out, behold [others] brought to him a dumb person possessed with a demon. And when, *by the word of Jesus*, the demon was expelled, the dumb man spake; and the multitudes were astonished, saying, It was never seen so in Israel. But the Pharisees continued their blasphemous charge, and said, He casts out demons by the prince of the demons, *without any regard to his former confutation of it.*

REFLECTIONS.

We have here a scene of complicated wonders, worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance. Any single story of this kind might justly move our admiration; but when we are reading the life of Christ; such a constellation of miracles rises, that the number renders us less sensible of the lustre and glory of each.—We may observe in the story of the distempered woman a mixture of weakness and of faith. She could not reasonably think to steal a cure, without the knowledge of him by whom it was wrought; or imagine a charm in the garment

* There were persons who made it their business to play on musical instruments, and sing to them, in lamentations for the dead. On the death of children flutes especially were used.

† MARK, "When he was come in."—LUKE, "weep not."

that Christ wore, which could produce so glorious an effect, independent on his agency and will. Yet she acted as if she had thought thus; and a compassionate Redeemer commended her faith, and excused her infirmity. Such candour should we exercise towards those in whom we find any thing truly valuable; *not despising the day of small things*, but ready to encourage and support the weak, and to commend whatever good we may discover in them.

We have already beheld *Christ* frequently giving sight to the blind, and casting out evil spirits: but we have here a second instance of his power over death, and behold one under its dominion *hearing the voice of the Son of God*! In how majestic, and yet in how gentle a manner, does he address himself to this admirable work! *Dameel, I say unto thee, Arise.* And immediately she heard and obeyed. Thus shall he, with equal ease, call forth myriads of his saints, who now seem perished in the dust: and it may be said with regard to them also, in reference to that day, *They are not dead, but sleep.* The maiden, of whom we here read, arose only to a dying life; a life which needed the support of food, and was in no respect more noble or more secure than that of other mortals: but we look for a *better resurrection*, in which all the infirmities of the body shall be left behind in the grave; and *there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying.* In expectation of this, let us restrain immoderate sorrow when our pious friends are taken away: let us not make too much ado on the occasion, nor allow ourselves to be thrown into a tumult of passion, even when our children are stretched on the bed of death; but believing in Christ, and governing ourselves by his precepts and maxims, let us in humble resignation, and submissive though mournful silence, wait the issues of his providence and grace; since he knows how, as in this instance, to over-rule the calamities of our families to the good of our souls, and even to strengthen our faith by those exercises which might seem most likely to overthrow it.

SECTION LXXIII.

Christ renews his visit to Nazareth, where he is again rejected; and thence takes a circuit through the neighbouring country. MATT. xiii. 54, &c. ix. 35, &c. MARK vi. 1—6.

AND he went out from thence, and came again into his own country; and his disciples followed him. And when the sabbath was come, he began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing him, were struck with amazement, and said, What wisdom is this which is given to him, that even such miracles are done by his hand? Is not this the carpenter, the son of the carpenter? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not James and Joses, and Simon and Judas his brethren or kinsmen? And are not all his sisters

* MATT. "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works."

(*or the women*) here with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him.

But Jesus said unto them, a prophet is no where less esteemed than in his own country, and among his relations, even in his own family. And he could not there do any miracle, excepting that he laid his hands upon a few sick people, and cured them; but he did not perform many mighty works on account of their unbelief. And he wondered at their infidelity.—And Jesus, *departing from Nazareth*, went round about all the *neighbouring cities and villages*, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the good news of the kingdom; and healing every disease, and every malady among the people. And beholding the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were faint, and exposed as sheep that had no shepherd. Then he says to his disciples, The harvest is indeed great, but the labourers are few: Therefore make your supplications to the Lord of the harvest, that he would thrust forth labourers into the harvest.

REFLECTIONS.

Since the blessed Jesus vouchsafed to renew his visit to Nazareth, where they had attempted to murder him on his first preaching among them, let us *not be weary of well-doing*; nor refuse to renew our attempts on the most obstinate sinners, where the interests of their immortal souls are concerned.—But though they were astonished at his wisdom, and could not but allow the mighty works that he had wrought; yet these ungrateful creatures went on to reject him, and in so doing were *condemned out of their own mouth*: nor can we be at any loss for instances of those who in later ages have fallen under the like condemnation.

He is spoken of as *the carpenter*; which intimates that he once wrought at that mean employment. What amazing condescension was this in the Son of God, and the *Heir of all things, by whom also the worlds were made*! Yet surely while the hands of Christ were employed in these daily labours, his soul was rising in holy contemplations and devout affections. So may we intermingle pious meditations with our secular cares, and have *our conversation in heaven*, while our dwelling is on earth!

How much did these Nazarenes lose by their obstinate prejudices against Jesus! How many diseased bodies might have been cured, how many lost souls might have been recovered and saved, had they given him a better reception! May divine grace deliver us from that unbelief, which does as it were disarm Christ himself, and render him a *savour of death*, rather than of life, to our souls!

Still he continued his gracious labours, and, when rejected in one city, went and preached in another; still surrounded with a crowd of admirers, whom he viewed with tender regard. Let us ministers learn of him, tenderly to pity those who are faint and exposed to danger, and are *as sheep having no shepherd*. The extreme necessities of his churches in many places are but too apparent: let us earnestly

† Their unbelief prevented their application to him.

pray, that God would behold them with compassion ; that he would graciously provide for their instruction, and would *thrust forth* such labourers among them as may be diligent and faithful in their work, and prove the happy instruments of *gathering in fruit to everlasting life*.

SECTION LXXIV.

Our Lord sends forth his apostles with instructions to preach the gospel:
 MATT. x. 1—15. MARK vi. 7—11. LUKE ix. 1—5.

AND Jesus, having called his twelve disciples together, he gave them power and authority over all demons, or, unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every distemper, and every malady.—Now the names of the twelve apostles are these : The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother ; James, *the son of Zebedee*, and John his brother ; Philip and Bartholomew ; Thomas and Matthew the publican ; James *the son of Alphaeus* ; and Libbeus whose surname was Thaddeus ; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who even betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent forth by two and two, and commanded them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick, saying, *Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, nor enter into any city of the Samaritans* : But go ye rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, proclaim saying, The kingdom of heaven is approaching. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons ; and as you have received freely, freely give.—And he commanded them, that they should take nothing for *their* journey, except only a staff. And he said unto them, provide neither bread, nor money, neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses ; nor a scrip for your journey ; nor *think it needful to have two coats apiece* ; nor even shoes*, but be shod *just as you are* with sandals ; nor yet take any staves, but those that you are used to walk with. For the labourer is worthy of his food, and all necessary supplies.

And he further said unto them, Into whatsoever city or village you enter, inquire who in it is worthy ; and whatever house you enter into, continue there till you leave the place. And when you enter into any family, salute it *as the usual custom is, saying, "Peace be upon this house."* And if the family be worthy, your peace shall come upon it : but if it be not worthy, your peace shall return unto you, *in blessings on your own heads*. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hearken to your words ; when you come out of that house or city, shake off the very dust of your feet, as a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment, for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, than for that city.

REFLECTIONS.

What abundant reason is there for humble thankfulness that the ambassadors of Christ were thus sent forth to preach the gospel, and

* A kind of short boots used in long journeys.

that at length their number was increased, and their commission enlarged; so that instead of their being thus confined to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, their instructive line is gone out through all the earth, and their words have resounded even to the end of the world. May the purport of their message be seriously attended to! since it will so certainly be a *savour of life or of death*, of eternal salvation or aggravated condemnation and ruin. Let us tremble to think, that it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomerrah in the day of judgment than for those by whom the gospel is rejected: and let us earnestly pray that divine grace may enable us to receive it in the love of it, and to obey the truth, that we may be saved.

They who have the honour in this respect to succeed the apostles as ministers of this gospel, may learn most useful instructions from this discourse of our divine Master. Let them speak and act as the messengers of peace and the friends of mankind, who cordially wish well to all around them; and gratefully acknowledge the kindness which, as faithful labourers, they have justly deserved. Let them shew a true greatness of mind in an apparent superiority to temporal interests and present gratifications; easy in whatever accommodations they find where Providence leads them; and forgetting themselves, to remember their Master, and the souls he has committed to their care.—Let them faithfully warn all around them of the importance of their eternal concerns, and of the unutterable danger of receiving the grace of God in vain, that, whether men will hear or forbear, they may be clean from their blood. And, while we preserve such a temper and conduct, we may cheerfully hope that God will be with us in the way that we go, and, how precarious soever our circumstances may seem, will give us food to eat, and raiment to put on: May we all have this token for good, that God will take care of our interests; even the consciousness of our being faithfully engaged to promote his glory, and our joyful readiness to spend and be spent for the service of souls!

SECTION LXXV.

Our Lord warns his apostles of the danger and opposition they might expect in his service. MATT. X. 16—28.

- 16 **B**EHOLD I send you out as sheep, in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore prudent as serpents, and harmless as doves.
- 17 But be upon your guard against men; for they will betray you to the councils, and will scourge you in the synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors and kings on my account, for a witness to them, and to the heathen. But when they shall deliver you up, be not solicitous how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that very hour what you shall speak.
- 20 For it is not so much you that speak, as the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.
- 21 Nevertheless, the malice of your enemies shall prevail over natural affection: and one brother shall betray another to death; and the

father the son ; and children shall rise up against their parents,
 22 and cause them to be put to death. And you shall be hated of all
 men for the sake of my name ; but he that endureth to the end
 23 shall be saved. But when they persecute you in one city, flee to
 another : for verily I say unto you, You shall not finish *your pro-*
gress through the cities of Israel, until the Son of man shall come
to take vengeance on your cruel persecutors.*
 24 You have no reason to be surprised at this ill usage ; for the dis-
 25 ciple is not above his teacher, nor the servant above his lord : It
 is sufficient if the disciple be as his teacher, and the servant as his
 lord. If they have called the Master of the family Beelzebub,
 26 how much more his domestics ? Therefore fear them not : for
 there is nothing hid which shall not be revealed ; nor secret which
 27 shall not be made known. What I say to you in darkness, speak
 it in the light ; and what you hear in the ear, proclaim from the
 28 house-tops. And be not afraid of them who kill the body, and
 cannot kill the soul ; but rather fear him who is able to destroy
 both soul and body in hell.

REFLECTIONS.

How apparently fit is it that this eternal and almighty God should
 be the object of our humble fear, and that in comparison with him
 we should fear nothing else ! All the terrors of the world are disarm-
 ed by this ; and by this are its flatteries also disarmed. In whatever
 stations of life we are fixed, let this engage us to be faithful to God
 in them : so shall we be most truly faithful to ourselves !—The apos-
 tles were exposed to peculiar dangers and trials ; but *all that will live*
godly in Christ Jesus must expect some degree of persecution. Let
 us therefore *arm ourselves with the same mind*, that we may bear it with
 a truly Christian fortitude. May divine grace teach us to mingle the
wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove, and to shelter
 ourselves from the ill usage of a perverse and sinful generation, so far
 only as we can do it without offering any violation to our consciences !

It is indeed matter of great lamentation, that the sentiments of
 benevolence and goodness, which seem so natural to the human mind,
 and are always so ornamental and delightful, should prevail no more :
 and it is shameful that the name of religion, so well calculated to cul-
 tivate these sentiments, should be made use of as an engine to de-
 stroy them ; and instead of cementing kingdoms and families in clo-
 ser and more affectionate bonds, should inspire them even with mor-
 tal animosity. Let us bless God for our public liberties ; and earnest-
 ly pray, that where persecution reigns in its utmost terror, *the wrath*
of man may praise him, and the remainder of that wrath be restrained !

The *ill usage* which the blessed Jesus endured from an ungrateful
 world, may surely prevent our being surprised or offended if we meet
 with some share of it too. May we be willing to *suffer with him*, that
 we may at length *reign with him* ! And if by unexpected revolutions

* The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus is often called the *coming of the Son of man*.

in providence we should be called out to the severest trials, may *the spirit of glory and of God rest upon us !* and may we not account even *our lives dear unto us*, that, approving our fidelity to him, we may *finish our course with joy !*

SECTION LXXVI.

Our Lord assures his apostles of God's providential care ; and promises future rewards to all that faithfully serve him. They go to different parts to preach the gospel. MATT. X. 29, &c. xi. 1. MARK vi. 12, 13. LUKE ix. 6.

- 29 **O**UR Lord, for the encouragement of the apostles, amidst these dangers, thus addressed them : Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing ? yet not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore ; you are more valuable than many sparrows. Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, 30 31 32 33 I also will confess him before my Father in heaven : But whosoever shall renounce me before men, I also will renounce him before my Father in heaven.
- 34 Do not suppose that I am come to send peace on the land ; for though my gospel has a tendency to promote it, yet the prejudices and lusts of men will so oppose it, that it will rather seem, from the 35 event, that I came not to send peace but a sword. For they will be so persecuted even by their nearest relations, that I may say, I am come to set a man at variance against his own father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her 36 mother-in-law. And a man's enemies shall be those of his own 37 family. Prepare yourselves then for such severe trials, remembering, that he who loves father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me ; and he that loves son or daughter more than me, is 38 not worthy of me. And he that does not take his cross, and follow after me, is not worthy of me. He that finds and saves his 39 life, by deserting my cause shall lose it ; but he that loses his life for my sake, shall find it in a far nobler state of being.
- 40 He that entertains you, does in effect entertain me ; and he that 41 entertains me, does also entertain him that sent me. He that entertains a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet ; and he that entertains any righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive the reward of a right- 42 eous man. And whosoever shall give to drink, unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall by no means lose his reward. And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of giving instructions to his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach the Jews, and to preach in their cities.
- 12 Mark vi. And they (*the twelve apostles*) departed, and went through the towns of Galilee and preached the gospel, that men

13 should repent. And they expelled many demons, and anointed many sick persons with oil, *as a signal of healing*, and cured them every where.

REFLECTIONS.

Justly may the blessed Jesus set so high a value on himself, and on the blessings of his grace : justly may he insist upon our readiness to abandon all for him, who is so just an equivalent for all. May his grace teach us to love him more than the dearest of our relations, and even to be ready for his sake to sacrifice our lives ! May it make us willing to *take up and bear any cross* for him, who *bore his cross* and expired upon it for us !

The *gospel* has indeed been the occasion of much contention and persecution, not only in Judea but elsewhere : yet let us not charge it upon any malignity, or any deficiency in that, but on the lusts and corruptions of men, who have either directly opposed or grossly perverted it. Let us endeavour to arm ourselves with courage to encounter, and resolution to endure, whatever persecutions or injuries our adherence to it may cost us ; ever confiding in that gracious Providence which extends itself even to the meanest creatures : reposing ourselves on the support of divine consolations, and esteeming ourselves happy, even in *losing our lives* in this world, if we may find them in that which is everlasting.

In the mean time, may this excellent discourse of our blessed Redeemer animate us to every *work of faith*, and every *labour of love* ! Let not the poorest be discouraged from some charitable attempt for the good of others ; since the munificence of our heavenly Master will remember *even a cup of cold water* given to the least of his servants under that character. Yet since there will be such a variety of rewards proportionable to different degrees of liberality and zeal, let us indulge a generous ambition of *abounding in the work of the Lord*, that we may shine with distinguished glory in the day of retribution, and have *an abundant entrance into his kingdom*.

SECTION LXXVII.

Herod hears of Jesus, and suspects him to be John the Baptist, whom he had lately murdered. MATT. 1, 2, 6—12. LUKE ix. 7—9.
A more particular account of John's death. MARK vi. 16—29.

AT that time king Herod (the tetrarch) heard of the fame of Jesus, and of all the things that were done by him and his apostles ; for his name was spread abroad. And he said to his servants, This is John the Baptist ; he is risen from the dead, and for this reason extraordinary powers operate in him. And he was exceedingly anxious ; for it was said by some others, that John was risen from the dead. And by some, that Elijah had appeared ; and by others, that one of the ancient prophets was risen again ; and others said, It is a prophet of former ages or a person like one of the prophets.

MARK vi. 16. But when Herod heard *what was discoursed of Jesus*, he said *with great anxiety*, John I have beheaded; but who is this, of whom I hear such things? *I cannot but suspect that it is John, that venerable holy man, whom I beheaded, and greatly fear he is risen from the dead.* And he desired to see him. *His guilty mind was thus tormented not without reason; for (as before observed) Herod had seized John, and bound him in prison, on account of Herodias; because John had said, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. And Herodias would have put him to death; but for a long time she could not; for Herod had so great a reverence for John* that he would not yield to her solicitations.*

21 *At length, however, she succeeded. And a convenient day happened, of preferring her petition with unexpected advantage, when Herod on his birth-day made a supper for his lords, and chief officers, and other persons of distinguished rank in Galilee. And Salome the daughter of the above-mentioned Herodias by Philip, her former husband, coming in, and dancing in the midst, and pleasing Herod and his guests, the king said to the maiden, in a kind of transport, Ask of me whatever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And when she seemed surprised, he promised her with an oath, and profanely swore unto her more than once,† I will give thee whatsoever thou wilt ask of me, even to the value of half my kingdom. And she went out, and said to her mother, What shall I ask? And she replied, The head of John the Baptist. And being‡ urged by her mother, she immediately came unto the king with eagerness, and made her demand, saying, I desire that thou wouldst give me, presently, the head of John the Baptist, here in a charger||.*

26 *And the king was exceedingly sorry; nevertheless, for the sake of his oaths, and his guests, he would not deny her, but ordered that it should be given her. And immediately the king sent one of his guards, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went, and beheaded John in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the maiden; and the maiden with her own hands, brought it and delivered it to her mother. And his disciples hearing of it came to the prison, and took up his corpse, and laid it in a sepulchre, and went and told Jesus.*

REFLECTIONS.

How dreadful a thing is it to have a guilty and accusing conscience! and how remarkable was the force of it in the instance before us!

* A few clauses are here repeated from Mark (§ 28.) to introduce the account of John's death.

† This clause, with a few others, is inserted from Matthew. That Herod repeated his oath, see v. 26.

‡ MATT. "before." This word in the above connexion seemed redundant. Ed.

|| A large dish. It was customary for Eastern princes to require the heads of those whom they ordered to be executed to be brought to them, that they might be assured of their death.

Herod was a king, yet it addressed him in language of terror, and made itself heard and felt amidst all the hurries and flatteries of a court. Vain was the power of a prince; vain the caresses of a favourite mistress, basely gratified with the blood of a prophet; and vain the yet more besetting tenets of a *Sadducee*. In one instance at least a resurrection shall be believed; and if a prophet arise in Israel, Herod shall be among the first to say, *It is John the Baptist, risen from the dead*; and shall be ready to forebode the sad effects of his recovered life, and to prognosticate evil to himself from the mighty works he performed. Let us make it our care to preserve a *conscience void of offence*, that instead of a continual torment, it may be to us a *continual feast*! And if we really desire to preserve it, let us take heed that we be not excessively transported with the entertainments of life, or rashly enter ourselves into engagements which perhaps may plunge us into some degree of guilt, whether they be performed or violated.

We see, in this dreadful instance of Herodias, what an implacable degree of malice may arise in the hearts of sinners on being reprov'd for the most scandalous and mischievous vices. Instead of owning the obligation to one that would have plucked her *as a brand out of the burning*, she thirsts insatiably for his blood; and chooses rather to indulge her cruelty and revenge in taking away his life, than to gratify her avarice and ambition in demanding a gift that might have been equal to the half of a kingdom.—But how mysterious was that providence which left the life of so holy a man in such infamous hands, and permitted it to be sacrificed to the malice of an abandoned harlot, to the petulance of a vain girl, and to the rashness of a foolish and perhaps an intoxicated prince, who made the prophet's head the reward of a dance! *The ways of God are unsearchable*! but we are sure he can never be at a loss to repay his servants in another world for the greatest sufferings they endure in this, and even for life itself, when given up in his cause.

We may reasonably conclude that death could never be an unreasonable surprise to this excellent saint. When the executioner came into the prison by night, perhaps breaking in upon his slumbers, and executed his bloody commission almost as soon as he declared it, a soul like his might welcome the stroke, as the means of liberty and glory; assured that the transient agony of a moment would transmit it to a kingdom where the least of its inhabitants would be in holiness, honour, and felicity, superior to John in his most prosperous and successful state on earth.—His enemies might a while insult over him, while his disciples were mingling their tears with his dust, and lamenting the residue of his days cut off in the midst. His death was *precious in the sight of the Lord*, and the *triumphing of the wicked was short*. So will he ere long plead the cause of all his injured people, and give a *cup of trembling and astonishment* to those that have made themselves drunk with their blood. Let cruelty and tyranny do their worst, verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.

SECTION LXXVIII.

The apostles being returned, our Lord passes over the sea of Tiberias ; miraculously feeds above five thousand, and retires to pray. MATT. xiv. 13—23. MARK vi. 30—46. LUKE ix. 10—17. JOHN vi. 1—15.

AND the apostles, when they were returned, gathered together unto Jesus, and told him all the occurrences of their journey ; both what they had done, and what they had taught. And when Jesus heard of it, he said to them, Come ye yourselves privately into a solitary place and repose a while ; for there were many coming and going, so that they had no opportunity even to eat. And accordingly, after these things, he took them, and retired ; and they departed from thence in a ship privately, and retired into a desert belonging to the city called Bethsaida. And Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And when the people saw them departing ; and many knew him, and others heard of it, a great multitude followed him ; because they had seen his miracles, which he performed on them that were diseased. And they ran thither on foot out of all the cities, and outwent them, and came together to him.

And Jesus, when he came out, and saw a great multitude, was moved with compassion for them ; because they were as sheep having no shepherd : and he received them, and began to teach them many things ; and spake to them concerning the kingdom of God, and healed their sick, even all those that had need of healing. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there sat down with his disciples and the multitude about him. (And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was near).

And when the day now began to decline*, and evening came on, then some of his disciples, particularly the twelve apostles, came to him, and said, This is a desert place, and the time is now far advanced ; dismiss the multitude, that they may go into the towns and country-places round about, and lodge, and may buy themselves bread, for they have nothing to eat. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes, and seeing a great company come to him, he says to Philip, whence shall they buy bread that they may eat. (And this he said to try him ; for he himself knew what he was about to do). Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. But Jesus said to them, They have no need to go away, give ye them [something] to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread and meat for all this people, and give it them to eat ? He says to them, How many loaves have you ? go and see. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, says unto him, There is a lad here, that has five barley loaves, and two small fishes ; but we have no more ; and what are they among so many ? And he said, bring them hither to me. [Now there was much grass in the place†.] And he

* MARK. "And was far spent." † LUKE. "and get food."

† This clause seems better transposed. ED.

commanded the multitude to sit down upon the green grass ; and he said to his disciples, cause them all to sit down by companies. And they did so†. The men therefore sat down in rows, by hundreds and fifties, about five thousand in number. And Jesus, taking the five loaves and the two fishes, looked up to heaven, and, having given thanks, he brake the loaves and distributed them to his disciples, that they might set *them* before the multitude who were set down ; and the disciples *gave them* to the multitude : and he likewise divided the two fishes among them all, as much as they would *take*. And they did all eat, and were satisfied. And when they were filled, he says to his disciples, gather up the broken pieces that remain, that nothing may be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, and of the fishes, which remained over and above to them that had eaten. And they who had eaten of the loaves, were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

The men therefore, having seen the miracle which Jesus wrought, said, Truly this is the prophet who was to come into the world. Jesus therefore, knowing that they were ready to come and seize him by force to make him king, immediately obliged his disciples to get into the ship, and to go before him to the other side of the creek, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the multitude. And, when he had dismissed them, and the evening was come, he again withdrew, and ascended up by himself alone to a mountain to pray.

REFLECTIONS.

So evidently true is it that *man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God* ! How wonderful did the power of Christ appear in thus multiplying the food ! and how amiable his compassion, in his affectionate concern for the relief of his necessitous followers ! It is to be esteemed a great happiness when the ministers of the gospel have it in their power to assist men in their temporal as well as spiritual necessities ; and it is peculiarly incumbent upon them thus to *do good and communicate ; for with such sacrifices from their hands God is peculiarly well pleased*, and the success of their ministry may be greatly promoted by them.

The disciples received from the hand of Christ the food they delivered to the people : and so should ministers be concerned that they may receive from Christ what they dispense to others as the *bread of life*, and that they also at the same time may live upon it as the support of their own souls. How great an honour is it to be employed as *stewards of the mysteries of God* ! Let not immoderate secular cares, let not the desire of worldly riches or greatness interrupt us in this blessed work ! Christ withdrew from those who would have made him king : ill therefore does it become his disciples to pursue earthly grandeur ; and most unworthy is it of his ministers to act as if *his kingdom were of this world*. May we *learn in every state to be content* ! In want may we cheerfully trust Providence !

† LUKE, “ and caused them all to sit down.”

In plenty, may we not wantonly abuse it ! but learn, by his command of *gathering up the fragments* even of this miraculous feast, a wise frugality in the use of our enjoyments ; that *nothing may be lost*, nor a reserve be wanting by which the streams of future liberality may be fed !

When the day had been thus employed, Christ *retired to a mountain to pray*. Thus must secret devotion attend our public labours for the instruction and salvation of men, if we would secure that divine blessing, without which, neither the most eloquent preaching, nor the most engaging and benevolent conduct, can command or promise success.

SECTION LXXIX.

The disciples are overtaken by a storm ; and Christ, walking on the sea, stills the tempest. MATT. xiv. 24, &c. MARK vi. 47, &c. JOHN vi. 16—21.

AND when the evening was come, his disciples went down to the sea-side. And having entered into the ship, they were going to the other side of the sea towards Capernaum : and it was now dark, and the ship was in the midst of the sea. Now Jesus was not come to them, but was alone on the land. And the sea arose, by reason of a violent wind which blew ; and the vessel was tossed by the waves ; for the wind was contrary to them. So when they had rowed about twenty-five or thirty furlongs, in the fourth watch of the night, *or about three o'clock in the morning*, Jesus, perceiving they were weary with rowing, came to them, walking on the sea, and *he seemed as if he would have passed by them*. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, and passing near the ship, they were terrified, saying, It is an apparition ; and they cried out for fear. For they all saw him ; and were troubled. And he immediately spoke to them, and said, Take courage ; for it is I, be not afraid.

And Peter answering, said unto him, Lord, if it be thou, command me to come to thee upon the water. And he said, come ; and Peter came down from the ship, and walked on the water to come unto Jesus : but perceiving the wind strong, he was afraid, and he began to sink, and cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretching out his hand, laid hold on him ; and said to him, O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt ? And he ascended to them into the bark ; and, when they were come aboard, they received him with pleasure. And the wind ceased ; and the ship was immediately at the land to which they were going. And they were exceedingly amazed in themselves, and astonished beyond measure. For their heart was hardened, and they considered not the [miracle of the] loaves. Then they that were in the ship, came and worshipped him, saying, thou art indeed the Son of God.

And, when they had passed over *the lake*, they came to the land of Gennesareth, and put to shore. And when they came out of the vessel, they immediately knew him. And the men of that place who

knew him sent out, and ran to all that country round about : and they began to carry about the sick in beds, and brought unto him all that were diseased, to the place where they heard he was. And wherever he entered into towns, or cities, or country villages, they laid the sick in the public streets, and entreated him that they might at least touch the fringe of his garment ; and as many as touched him, were perfectly recovered.

REFLECTIONS.

Thus it still pleases Christ to exercise the faith of his people, that he may strengthen their dependence on him, and demonstrate at once his compassion and his power. Thus are storms permitted oftentimes to rise around them, and for a while they are left in darkness, and are *tossed with tempests* : but he is near at hand, even when they think him at the remotest distance ; and when he seems to be *passing by them*, as regardless of their danger and distress, he has designs of grace and mercy to them, and acts in such a way on purpose to quicken and excite them to a greater earnestness and fervour in their application to him. Happy would the Christian be, could he always discern his Lord, and always conceive of him aright ! but alas, how often does he appear to the disordered mind as the object of terror rather than of confidence ! and, in a day of darkness, while he may seem to treat his suffering people with neglect, instead of seeking him with a more earnest importunity, how are they ready to be overwhelmed with fears, and to conclude he has forgotten them !

At the *command* of Jesus, Peter ventured to go to him on the sea. And through what storms and dangers may we not safely venture, if we are sure that our Lord calls us ! Yet the rebuke which he suffered may warn us not rashly to throw ourselves on unnecessary trials, lest our excess of confidence end in fear and disgrace. Modesty and caution will adorn our other virtues, and render us amiable in the eyes of the humble Jesus.—In how many circumstances of life does the Christian appear to his own imagination, like Peter, *beginning to sink* in the waves ! But in the time of our distress, like him, let us cry to Jesus for help ; and, while we are lifting up the hands of faith and prayer, we may humbly hope that Christ will stretch forth his omnipotent arm for our rescue. Let every experience of this kind, and all the seasonable aid he is from time to time imparting to us, establish our dependence on him, and enforce our obedience to him, as the *Son of God*. May divine grace deliver us from that *hardness of heart*, that stupidity and insensibility of mind, which sometimes remains unconvinced in the midst of evidence, and unaffected under the most moving illustrations of his abilities and willingness to help us !

SECTION LXXX.

Our Lord, being followed by the multitude to Capernaum, cautions them against those worldly views with which they sought him, and declares himself to be the bread of life. JOHN VI. 22—40.

22 **O**N the morrow, the multitude, who continued on the other side of the sea, as they saw there was no other vessel there, but that one into which his disciples entered, and that Jesus did not go with his disciples into the vessel, but that his disciples
23 went away alone : (Though there came other vessels from Tiberias nigh to the place where they had eaten bread after the Lord
24 had given thanks :) The multitude therefore, when they saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, went also themselves aboard the vessels, and came to Capernaum, seeking for
25 Jesus. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither ? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, You seek me, not because you have seen the miracles, but because you have
27 eaten of the loaves and were filled. Labour not to procure the meat which perishes, but that meat which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give you ; for him has God the Father sealed*.

28 They therefore said unto him, What must we do, that we may
29 so work the works of God ? Jesus replying said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent.
30 Then they said to him, What sign therefore shewest thou, that we may see it, and believe thee ? What dost thou perform ? Our fathers did eat manna in the wilderness ; as it is written (*Psalms*
32 lxxviii. 24.) "He gave them bread from heaven to eat." Then Jesus said to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven ; but my Father giveth you the true bread
33 from heaven. For that is the bread of God which descendeth from heaven, and giveth life to the world. They therefore said to
35 him, Lord, give us evermore this bread. Then Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life ; he that comes to me shall never hunger ;
36 and he that believes in me shall never thirst. But I have told you, that you have even seen me, and yet you believe not in me. All that the Father giveth me, will come to me ; and him that cometh
38 to me, I will by no means cast out. Because I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me.
39 And this is the will of the Father who sent me, That of all whom he has given me, I should lose none ; but should raise it
40 up at the last day. Even this is the will of him that sent me, That every one who views the Son with an attentive eye, and believes on him, should have eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day.

* Authorized by proper credentials, or miraculous powers.

REFLECTIONS.

How gratefully should we acknowledge the divine goodness, in giving *this true bread from heaven for the life of the world*; and how solicitous should we be, that by a true faith we may feed upon it! In the midst of many ensnaring circumstances, let us be strictly watchful over ourselves, that the vigour of our pursuits and labours may not be laid out on the *meat which perishes*, to the forgetfulness of that *which endures to eternal life*: but acknowledging those authentic seals by which Christ is marked out to that important trust, may we apply to him as sent of God the Father to be the Author of eternal salvation, and come to him to be partakers of his saving benefits!

It must surely grieve us to observe the neglect and contempt with which he is too frequently treated; but it may comfort us that there yet remains a *remnant according to the election of grace*. *All that the Father giveth him, will come to him*; and blessed be God that this appears to be no inconsiderable number. *Secret things belong to the Lord our God*; let it therefore be our care to *make first our calling*, and then by a happy consequence, *our election sure*. Whatever discouragements may arise in our way, may we fly to cast ourselves at the foot of Christ; and then we may be sure he will never on any consideration *cast us out*, but will receive us in the arms of his almighty compassion, and, having sheltered and maintained us in his house on earth, will at length conduct us safely to the presence of his glory, and to the blessed abodes of complete felicity!

SECTION LXXXI.

Christ enlarges on the necessity and benefit of feeding upon him as the bread of life. JOHN VI. 41—52.

41 **T**HEN the Jews who were about him murmured, because he
 42 said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And
 they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and
 mother we have known? How therefore does he say, that I came
 43 down from heaven? Jesus therefore replied, and said unto them,
 44 Do not murmur among yourselves: No man can come to me,
 unless the Father who hath sent me draw him; and then I will
 45 raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets (*Isa.*
liv. 13. and Jer. xxxi. 34.) “and they shall all be taught by God.”
 Therefore every one who has heard and learned from the Father,
 46 comes unto me. Not that any one hath seen the Father, except
 47 he who is from God. He hath seen the Father. Verily, verily,
 I say unto you, that he who believes on me hath everlasting life.
 48 I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilder-
 50 ness, and are dead: But this is the bread, which cometh down
 51 from heaven, that any one may eat of it, and not die. I, who
 came down from heaven, am the living bread: if any one eat of
 this bread, he shall live for ever. And the bread which I will give,
 52 is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews
 therefore contended with each other, saying, How can this man

53 give us his flesh to eat ? Then Jesus said to them, Verily, verily,
 I say unto you, Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and
 54 drink his blood, you have no life in you. He that eats my flesh,
 and drinks my blood, hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at
 55 the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink
 56 indeed. He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, abides in
 57 me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live
 by the Father ; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.
 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven ; not as *it was with*
 your fathers *who* did eat manna, and are dead ; but he that eats
 this bread, shall live for ever.

REFLECTIONS.

The hearers of Christ murmured, and perversely objected against his doctrine. Let not ministers now wonder, if the like capricious humour sometimes prompts their hearers to seek occasion of offence where there is none : let them learn of their great Master *in meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.* Our Lord expressly asserts the necessity of being *taught and drawn by the Father*, in order to our knowing him, and coming to him. Let us therefore humbly seek these influences ourselves, and fix our dependence upon them in all our attempts upon others for their conversion and edification.

Christ here gives us *line upon line, and precept upon precept*, to illustrate and enforce this important doctrine of the necessity of regarding him as the bread of life, and of feeding by faith on his flesh and blood, which he has *given for the life of the world.* Let us, as we desire any part in his saving blessings, most thankfully receive his flesh as *meat indeed*, and his blood as *drink indeed.* May God be merciful to those that call themselves Christians, and yet are strangers to such a believing intercourse with Christ, and to the derivation of spiritual life from him ! If this be enthusiasm, it is the enthusiasm of scripture ; and the denial or forgetfulness of these important doctrines, is like a fatal palsy to the soul, which chills, as it were, all its nerves, and destroys at once its sensibility and vigour, its pleasure and usefulness.

To represent and inculcate these great truths, our Lord afterwards instituted the sacrament of his supper, in which we not only commemorate his sufferings, but our own concern in them. It is the language of every intelligent approach to it, that we acknowledge the life of our souls to depend on the merit of his atonement, and the communications of his grace. This is eating his flesh, and drinking his blood : may we be nourished by it to eternal life ! Then though this mortal part of our nature drop into the dust, our souls will live and triumph ; nor shall our bodies finally perish, but be raised up by Christ in the great day to take their part in the full *joy of our Lord.* There these intermediate ordinances shall cease, and copious, uninterrupted streams of divine teachings, and divine influences, shall sweetly flow in upon our ever improving, active, rejoicing minds !

SECTION LXXXII.

Christ explaining the foregoing discourse in a spiritual sense, is forsaken by many of his disciples; and while the apostles assure him of their fidelity, he intimates the treachery of Judas. JOHN vi. 59, &c.

59 **T**HESE things he spake in the synagogue, as he was teaching
 60 in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, having
 61 heard it, said, This is a difficult discourse, who can hear it? But
 Jesus knowing in himself that his disciples murmured about it,
 62 said unto them, Does this offend you? What then, if ye shall see
 63 the Son of man ascending up where he was before? It is the Spirit
 that quickens, the flesh profits nothing: the words which I
 speak unto you are spirit, *they are to be taken in a spiritual*
 64 *sense, and, then you will find they are life to your souls.* But there
 are some of you who believe not. For Jesus knew from the be-
 gining, who they were that believed not, and who it was that should
 65 betray him. And he said, For this reason I told you, that no man
 can come unto me, except it be given him of my Father.
 66 From this time many of his disciples went back, and walked no
 67 more with him. Jesus therefore said unto the twelve *apostles*,
 68 Will you also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord,
 69 to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. We
 believe, and know, that thou art the Messiah, the son of the living
 70 God. Jesus answered them, Have I not chosen *all of you* twelve
 to a *station of importance in the church?* yet one of you is a devil.
 71 *This* he spake concerning Judas Iscariot [the son] of Simon; for
 he, *at that time*, had thoughts of betraying him, though he was one
 of the twelve.

REFLECTIONS.

We have, through the divine goodness, been made acquainted with those gospel truths, in their full evidence, and mutual connection, which were more obscurely hinted to those who attended on Christ's personal ministry: may we therefore hearken to the *spiritual sense* of this sublime and excellent discourse! And as the credible account of his ascension into glory is now added to the rest, let us receive the whole of his doctrine with the most humble submission: earnestly entreating the influences of divine grace, that we may not only be *drawn to Christ*, but be so firmly attached to his interest, that whoever else forsake him, we may *never go away*. On the contrary, may we rather collect an argument from their ingratitude and folly, more strenuously and more affectionately to adhere to him! Indeed *to whom should we go but to him? He has the words of eternal life.* From him therefore, in all lowly subjection of soul, may we learn those lessons on which our everlasting happiness depends!—May we never, like Judas, conceal a treacherous and disaffected heart, under the specious appearance of piety and goodness? This would be only imposing on ourselves; for his penetrating eye can never be deceived. May we approve the in-

tegrity of our souls in his sight, and repose an unlimited confidence in him, as one whom *we believe and know* to be a divine Saviour, *Christ the Son of the living God!*

SECTION LXXXIII.

Our Lord vindicates his disciples in neglecting the traditions of the Pharisees, and condemns those corrupt teachers for preferring them to the divine precepts. MATT. XV. 1—9. MARK VII. 1—13.

THERE were then gathered unto Jesus the Pharisees, and some of the Scribes, who were of Jerusalem, and came from thence, to watch and ensnare him. And seeing some of his disciples eat bread with, *what they counted*, polluted (that is, with unwashed) hands, they found fault with them; for the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat without washing their hands often, holding the tradition of the elders. And [when they come] from the market, they eat not, till they have washed their whole body. And there are many other things, which they receive and maintain, by the authority of the same tradition, as the washing of cups and pots, and brazen vessels, and the couches*.

Then the Pharisees and Scribes, came to Jesus and asked Him, Why do not thy disciples walk according to the tradition of the elders, but transgress it; for they eat with unwashed hands? And he answering said unto them, Why do you also transgress, even the command of God himself out of regard to your own vain tradition? For instance you well know that God has commanded by Moses, saying, "Honour thy father and thy mother:" "Whoso curseth father or mother let him surely die." But what you teach is contradictory to this divine command; for you assert, that any one may say to his father or mother when in distress, "Let that be CORBAN," that is to say, let it be reckoned as a gift, dedicated to the altar, by which thou mightest otherwise, receive advantage from me, and he shall then be free from the command, and not be under any obligation to honour and relieve his father or his mother†. And thus out of regard to such a rash and impious vow||, you no more permit him to do any thing for his father or his mother. And thus you have invalidated the word, and the command of God, by your tradition, which you have delivered o. . . O you hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophecy of you, saying, (as it is written, Isa. xxix. 13.) "This people draweth near to me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far estranged from me." Yet "In vain do they worship me, while they teach

* Viz. Those on which they were used to lie at their meals.

† MARK, "you fairly make void the command of God that you may observe your traditions."

‡ The plain meaning is, the Pharisees encouraged their disciples to refuse relief to their parents when in distress, under a pretence that their property was consecrated to God. ED.

|| Capellus has produced many passages from the Talmud to shew the superstitious regard the Jews had to such unnatural vows, as well as the ridiculous ways they sometimes took to evade them.

“doctrines that are *merely* human injunctions.” For leaving the commandment of God, you maintain the tradition of men, *relating to the washing of pots and cups; and many other such like things you do.*

REFLECTIONS.

How miserable is the case of those who, while they earnestly contend for the forms of divine worship, are losing both the improvement and reward which might be expected from a regular attendance upon it! This is the case of all who *draw near to God, with their lips, while their hearts are far from him.* May we abhor the vanity of such hypocritical behaviour in the presence of Him who *searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men.*

Let us learn from this just and severe sentence which our Lord passes on these superstitious Pharisees, to avoid the temper he condemns in them. It much less becomes us as Christians, and especially as Protestants, to impose on our brethren with rigorous severity those doctrinal decisions, or those ritual observances, which have not their express foundation in the word of God, to which we so constantly appeal as to our common rule. Happy had it been for the church in all ages and nations, had men exerted that zeal for the truths and the institutions of God in the beauty and glory of their native simplicity, which has carried them on to defend and propagate their own inventions, till religion itself has almost sunk under the weight of the ornaments in which they have dressed it, and the unwieldy armour which they have hung about it!

Let children learn from the command which Christ has vindicated, to honour *their parents* by a tender care of them in their declining days; remembering, that as no filial duty and gratitude can ever fully repay our obligations to such friends, so an affectionate regard to them is a proper and necessary expression of our filial piety to the great *Father of our spirits.* Justly may he esteem his temples profaned, rather than adorned, by the most costly gifts, which are the spoils of nature, and the trophies of inhumanity.

SECTION LXXXIV.

Christ pursues his discourse against the Pharisees, and inculcates the necessity of inward purity. MATT. xv. 10—20. MARK vii. 14—23.

WHEN our Lord had thus condemned the Pharisees to their face, he took this opportunity to undeceive the people. And having called all the multitude together to him, he said to them, Let every one of you hearken to me, and understand. There is nothing which enters into a man from without that can pollute him. *It is not that which goes into the mouth; but the things which come out of a man, are those that defile him, even that which comes out of his mouth.* If any one has ears to hear, let him hear.

And when he was come into the house apart from the multitude, his disciples came, and asked him concerning the meaning of this parable. And they said to him, *Knowest thou, that the Pharisees,*

who heard this saying, were offended? But he answered and said, Every plantation which my heavenly Father has not planted; shall be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind: and if the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into a ditch. But Peter answering said unto him, *We desire thee, however, to explain to us this parable more clearly.* And Jesus said to them, Are you likewise still so void of understanding, *as not to apprehend the sense of what I said?* Do you not yet perceive that whatsoever enters from without into a man, cannot defile him? Because whatsoever enters in at the mouth enters not into his heart, but goes into the belly, and is thrown off into the vault, which cleanses, *as it were*, all the food that a man eats. But, said he, that which comes out of a man really defiles him: for the things proceeding out of the mouth, come forth from the heart; and these are they that defile a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil reasonings, adulteries, fornications, murders; thefts, insatiable desires, malevolent affections; false witnessings, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, folly. All these evils come from within; and these are the things which do indeed pollute a man, and render him odious to the purity of the divine nature: but to eat with unwashed hands, which has no moral impurity in it, does not, and cannot defile a man: and it must have a very bad tendency to teach people to place religion in things so entirely foreign to it.

REFLECTIONS.

May we be all taught of God to maintain a constant watch over our own hearts, as remembering that *from thence are the issues of life*, and from thence the sources of *sin and death*! All the secret motions and sentiments of them are open to the divine examination and inspection. There then may we begin our cares, to *purify ourselves from all filthiness both of the flesh and spirit*, as ever we would *perfect holiness in the fear of God*.—We see what secret abominations our Lord has here discovered and marked out. It is a matter of much lamentation, that our corrupted nature abounds with such poisonous productions: let us earnestly pray that they may be rooted out by divine grace, lest we ourselves be *rooted out of God's vineyard*, as at once incumbering and deforming it!—May the blessed Spirit of God *create in us a clean heart*, and implant in our souls a temper opposite to all these enormities! may candour and purity, integrity and tenderness, piety and generosity, humility and wisdom, prevail in our hearts, and shine in our conduct! And, in a word, *whatsoever things are true and honest, just and pure, lovely and of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise*, let us think on these things, and practise them!

Let those who are employed to guide others be especially solicitous to know and pursue the right way themselves; lest, instead of *saving themselves, and those that hear them*, they both of them at last perish together. We are in danger of it if, like these Pharisees, we inculcate on our hearers a zeal for the circumstantials and appendages of religion, while its essentials are neglected; and perhaps some of

the greatest enormities of the mind are consecrated under an honourable name, and profanely listed under the banner of the God of holiness and love.

SECTION LXXXV.

Jesus expels a demon from the daughter of a Canaanitish woman ; and cures a man who was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech.—
MATT. XV. 21—29. MARK VII. 24, &c.

AND Jesus arose from thence, and withdrew to the *o* coasts of Tyre and Sidon: and he entered into a house *privately*, and would have had no one know *it*, but he could not *long* be concealed. For behold a Canaanitish woman, out of those coasts, whose young daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit, having heard of him, came, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David ; my daughter is grievously tormented by a demon.

Now the woman was a Greek, a native of Syro-phœnicia* ; and she besought him to cast out the demon from her daughter. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and entreated him, saying, Dismiss her *with the grant of her request* ; for she crieth after us. But he replying said, I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then she came, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me. But Jesus said to her (*yet further to exercise and illustrate her faith*) Let the children (*the Jews*) first be satisfied ; for it is not proper to take the children's bread, and throw it to the dogs (*as you Gentiles are commonly deemed by our nation*). And she replied and said to him, True, Lord ; yet the dogs under their master's table, eat the children's crumbs which fall from it. Then Jesus answering said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith ; for this saying, go thy way, and be it unto thee even as thou wilt : the demon is gone out of thy daughter. And her daughter was cured from that very hour. And returning back to her house, she found the demon was gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed *composed*.

And Jesus departed again from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and came near to the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis ; and he went up to a mountain, and sat down there. And they brought him one who was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech ; and they besought him that he would lay his hand upon him. And, taking him aside from the multitude, he put his fingers into his ears, and, spitting *on his finger*, touched his tongue ; and looking up to heaven, he groaned, and said unto him, Ephphatha ; that is, Be opened. And immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke distinctly. And he charged them that they should tell no one ; but the more he charged them, the more abundantly did they proclaim *the cure* : And they were struck with exceeding astonishment, and said, He hath done all things well ; *in the most amiable and graceful manner*, making both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

* This part of Phœnicia was so called, as it had been formerly conquered by the Syrians.

REFLECTIONS.

If there be any thing in the whole history of our Lord which might have a tendency to discourage and terrify the humble penitent, it would surely be his treatment of this poor *Canaanitish woman*, when she made so humble and so affectionate an application to him ; first keeping silence ; then intimating in words a coldness, not to say an aversion ; and at last representing her but as a *dog*, in comparison of the Jews. Surely such an answer had almost broke her heart, had it not been secretly supported by his grace, while his conduct seemed so unkind. Happy are they that, like her (who, though a *Gentile*, did in this instance approve herself a true *daughter of Abraham*) can against hope believe in hope ! Happy they who can thus extract arguments even from discouragements ! They will finally conquer and triumph, as this pious woman did ; and the honours of their faith will be commemorated even by Christ himself, who soon indulges the overflowing tenderness of his heart in the applause he bestows upon her, and the ample grant he makes her of all that she asked in its utmost extent.

The story of the deaf man, whose ears were opened and his tongue loosed, is one additional instance, among many more, of Christ's humility, as well as of his power. He retired from the admiring multitude ; he used means, when he could easily have wrought without them ; he solemnly addressed his heavenly Father, virtually acknowledging, while he looked up to heaven, that as man, he derived his miraculous power from above ; and he was so far superior to the sentiments of vanity, that he commanded men to conceal the most glorious and benevolent actions. May all his followers, and especially his ministers, learn of him who was thus meek and lowly ! neither acting as in their own strength, when they attempt a spiritual cure ; nor proclaiming their own praises when they have effected it. Then will they likewise do all things well ; and there will be that beauty in the manner, which no wise man would entirely neglect, even in those actions which are in themselves most excellent and great.

SECTION LXXXVI.

Our Lord, after many miracles, feeds above four thousand with seven loaves and a few small fishes. MATT. XV. 30, &c. MARK viii. 1—10.

AND while Jesus was seated on the mountain, there came to him, a great multitudes, having brought with them persons who were lame, blind, dumb, or maimed, and many others ; and they cast them at the feet of Jesus, and he healed them : So that the multitude was amazed when they beheld the dumb speaking ; the maimed made whole ; the lame walking ; and the blind seeing : and they glorified the God of Israel.

In those days, the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus having called his disciples to him, says unto them, I

have compassion on the multitude ; for they have continued with me now three days, and have nothing to eat : And I will not send them away fasting to their own houses, lest they should faint by the way : for several of them came from a considerable distance. And his disciples answered him, From whence can any one satisfy these men with bread here in *this desert country* ? And whence should we, whose stock is so small, have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude ? And he asked them, How many loaves have you ? and they said, seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground ; and having taken the seven loaves, and given thanks, he brake them and gave them to his disciples to set before them ; and they set them before the people. And as they likewise had a few small fishes, he took them also, and having blessed them, he commanded his disciples to set them also before the multitude. So they did all eat, and were satisfied : and they took up seven baskets full of what remained of the fragments. And they who had eaten, were about four thousand men, besides women and children. And he dismissed the multitude : and immediately entering into a ship with his disciples, he came into the parts of Dalmanutha, in the coasts of Magdala.

REFLECTIONS *.

With what a circle is our blessed Lord surrounded ! Let us pause a little, and endeavour to paint him to our imagination on this mountain, where the astonished multitudes so justly extolled all these mingled wonders of power and of grace. Let us reflect on the dumb speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, the deaf hearing, and the blind seeing, that with them *we may glorify the God of Israel*. But who can describe the sentiments of these happy creatures, who, without any dangerous or painful operation, found themselves, in a moment, restored beyond all the efforts of nature, and beyond all the prospects of hope ! With what pleasure did the ear, which had just been opened, listen to the pleasing accents of his instructive tongue ! How did the lame leap around him for joy ! and the maimed extend their recovered hands in grateful acknowledgments of his new creating power ! While the voice of the dumb sang forth his praises in sounds before unknown ; and the eye of the blind checked the curiosity which would have prompted it to range over the various and beautiful objects of unveiled nature, to fix its rapturous regards on the gracious countenance of him that had given it the day !

Let us further reflect with what correspondent pleasure must our Lord survey these grateful and astonished creatures, while his benevolent heart took its share in all the delight which he gave ! These trophies of his greatness, how unlike to those of the field, the monuments of desolation and slaughter ! Trophies, for which the hero must have struggled with the man, and might sit down and weep over his own success ! Whose heart is so insensible as not to feel an humane as well as devout pleasure in the history of these and the

* See those on a similar story, § 78.

like miracles, though the subjects on which they were wrought are long since mouldering in the dust ! But let us further recollect that our divine Leader has other yet more noble and more permanent trophies ; those immortal spirits, which he has redeemed, and sanctified, and saved ! So may our transported souls, O blessed Jesus, in the consciousness of health, vigour, and salvation, behold thee as our Deliverer ! So mayest thou view us with satisfaction, as *the travail of thy soul*, in that mountain of God where we hope to offer thee nobler praises, and for ever to consecrate to thy service those powers which thou hast recovered from weakness, dishonour, and ruin !

SECTION LXXXVII.

The Pharisees again demanding a sign, Christ upbraids their hypocrisy, and cautions his disciples against their leaven, and that of the Sadducees. MATT. XVI. 1—12. MARK VIII. 11—21.

AND when Jesus was landed in the coasts of Magdala, the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and began to examine him ; and to try him yet further, desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. But he answering said unto them, *You ask this out of a desire to cavil ; for in other cases you take up with degrees of evidence far short of those which you here reject : for instance, you say in an evening, It will be fair weather to-morrow, because the sky is of a fiery red ; and in the morning, it will be tempestuous weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, you know how to distinguish the face of the heavens, and can you not distinguish the signs of the times* ?* And, sighing deeply in his spirit, he said, *Why does this generation seek after a further sign ? Verily, as I said before, I say again to you, This is an evil and adulterous generation which demands a sign, and no sign shall be given it, unless it be the sign of the prophet Jonah, to which a remarkable resemblance will be quickly manifested in the resurrection of the Messiah on the third day.* And having said this, he left them ; and, entering again into the ship, departed to the other side.

And when his disciples were come to the other side of the sea, they had forgotten to take any bread ; and had no more than one loaf with them in the ship. And Jesus gave them a charge, saying, *Be very cautiously on your guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the leaven of Herod : And they debated among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread with us. Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why do you reason with yourselves because you have brought no bread ? Do you not yet consider, nor understand ? and have you still your hearts hardened ? Having eyes, do you not see ? and having ears, do you not hear ? and do you not remember what you were witnesses to but a few days ago ? When I broke the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up ? They say un-*

* Grotius has well observed, what a variety of signs marked out the time for the arrival of the Messiah.

to him twelve. And when I *divided* the seven *loaves* among the four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up ? And they said, seven. And he said to them, How is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread, *but meant* that you should be on your guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees ? Then they *were sensible of their mistake*, and understood that he did not charge them to beware of the leaven of bread ; but of the *evil doctrine and example* of the Pharisees and Sadducees, *against which so many of his discourses were most justly levelled.*

REFLECTIONS.

So evident is it that the circumstances of a scripture story may be remembered, where the design of it is overlooked or forgot ! It is much to be wished, that those which we have been surveying may not increase the number of such instances. In all those cases where in the arm of the Lord has been [displayed] in our favour, let us seriously reflect on the divine power and goodness, and learn from past experience to trust it for time to come. Never let us fall into the perverse suspicions of the *Israelites*, *Can God furnish a table in the wilderness ?* But let us *be strong in faith, giving glory to God*, and cheerfully repose ourselves on his care, who can never want wisdom to judge aright of the necessities of his people, or power to relieve them, even in the greatest extremities.

We see a new instance of the perverseness of these Scribes and Pharisees. They *tempted Christ* by unreasonable demands ; and he justly suffered them to go away without the additional demonstration they sought. It is not for us to prescribe to God what degrees of evidence he shall give us. Let us impartially pursue and improve what we have ; and be very careful that our sagacity, and openness to conviction, in other matters of much less importance, may not condemn our stupidity or obstinacy, where the truths of God and the salvation of our souls are concerned.

It is our concern to beware of erroneous principles in religion, and of every corrupt *leaven* which might be ready to insinuate itself into our minds ; especially of that, which, like the *leaven of the Pharisees*, would exalt our confidence in ourselves ; or, like that of the *Sadducees*, would impair our persuasion of a future judgment, and our solicitous concern to live as in the views of it. May the oracles of divine truth ever appear to our minds as the rule by which all doctrines are to be tried ! and let us, in the spirit of love, *contend earnestly for that faith* which we believe to have been *once delivered to the saints* ; that both our sentiments and actions may finally be found blameless, *unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ ! Amen.*

SECTION LXXXVIII.

Christ heals the blind man at Bethsaida; owns to his disciples that he is the Messiah, and applauds Peter for acknowledging him as such.
 MARK viii. 22—30. MATT. xvi. 13—20. LUKE ix. 18—21.

AND when our Lord had crossed the sea he came to Bethsaida, and they brought to him a blind man, and entreated him that he would touch him, *being assured this would be sufficient.* And he took hold of the blind man's hand, and led him out of the town, *choosing to work this miracle in private*; and having spit upon his eyes, and laid his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw any thing? And looking up he said, I see men walking as trees*. Then he laid his hands again upon his eyes, and caused him to look up, and he found his sight was restored, so that he saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his own house (*in a neighbouring village*) and said, Enter not into the town of Bethsaida to proclaim what has now been done; neither tell it to any in the town, *for they are unworthy the knowledge of such a miracle.* And Jesus, with his disciples, went out from thence, into the towns of Cæsarea Philippi.

And it came to pass by the way, when Jesus was come into those parts, *he retired for devotion.* And when he had been praying with his disciples apart, he inquired of them, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they replying, said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; but others that thou art Elijah; and others, Jeremiah; and others, that one of the ancient prophets is risen again. And, he then said to them, But whom do you yourselves say that I am? And Simon Peter answered, and said to him, Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God. And Jesus, replying, said unto him, Blessed art thou, O Simon Bar-Jonas (*i. e. the son of Jonas*;) for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father in heaven. And I also say to thee, Thou art indeed Peter; thou art (*as thy name signifies*) a rock; and as thou hast shewn it in this good confession, I assure thee, that upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell (*or the unseen world*) shall not finally prevail against it. And I will give unto thee, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and make thee the instrument of opening it both to Jews and Gentiles: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven; that is, thou shalt have authority to declare what precepts of the Mosaic religion are superseded, and what are continued, and what things are allowed or forbidden to my disciples; and I will myself confirm those decisions. And he strictly charged and commanded his disciples that they should tell no man this thing concerning him, that he was Jesus the Messiah.

* *q. d.* I can hardly distinguish men from trees but by their motion.

† Faith in me as the Son of God shall be its great support, and I will use thee as a glorious instrument in raising it.

REFLECTIONS.

We here behold the great Foundation of our faith and hope, even Jesus, the *Rock of ages*, the *same yesterday, to day, and for ever*, who is *Christ the Son of the living God*. *Other foundation can no man lay*. On him may our souls rest, and the fiercest tempests shall rage in vain ! Our Lord foretold that *the gates of hell should not be able to prevail against his church* as thus founded ; and we behold, even to this day, the accomplishment of the prediction. As Christians of one age have sunk into their graves, a new harvest has sprung up in the next ; and, in spite of all the artifices of Satan to pervert young minds, and all the advantages with which he attacks them, *instead of the Fathers have been the children*, to be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

Let us thankfully adore the divine goodness herein ; and be very sensible how much we are indebted to that goodness in those powers communicated to the apostles, on whom, as subordinate foundations, we are built. As they received so ample a commission, and obtained grace from the Lord to be faithful to it, let us pay the humblest regard to their teachings ; as well knowing, that what they have bound on earth is bound in heaven, and what they have inculcated, was solemnly confirmed by a divine authority.

If we have listened with attention to those immortal writings of theirs, by which *being dead they yet speak* ; and have found them the effectual means of revealing Christ in our hearts, in all his divine glories and saving powers ; let us remember that we owe it *not to flesh and blood*, or the most excellent human instruments alone, but to the influences of *our Father in heaven*.—That efficacious grace is freely exercised, and operates in various methods ; on some, in a more instantaneous way ; on others, like the power of Christ on the blind man of whom we have been reading, by more gradual advances. Let us be thankful for whatever light we receive, and press on to brighter discoveries ; and join with them proportionable degrees of gratitude to Christ, and veneration for his gospel.

SECTION LXXXIX.

Christ prophesies of his approaching sufferings, rebukes Peter for being offended at them ; and exhorts his disciples to self-denial, and a readiness for martyrdom in his cause. MATT. xvi. 21, &c. MARK viii. 31, &c. ix. 1. LUKE ix. 22—27.

NOW when Jesus had expressly declared that he was the Messiah, he from that time began more plainly than ever to teach, and shew to his disciples, that he, the Son of man, must go to Jerusalem ; and suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed : and *that he should be raised again on the third day*.

And as he now spake that saying plainly, *they were exceedingly surprised and troubled* : and Peter took him by the hand, and began to chide him, saying, God forbid, O Lord ! This shall not be unto thee.

But *Jesus*, when he had turned, and looked on his disciples, rebuked Peter, and said to him, Get thee behind me, Satan*, thou art a scandal to me ; for thou dost not regard the things of God, but those of men.

Then having called the multitude, with his disciples to him, he said unto them all, If any one is willing to come after me, let him deny himself, and daily take up his cross, and follow me, *even to crucifixion itself* ; for whosoever will save his life, shall lose it : but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall find *and* save it. For what would it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and be punished with the loss of his life ? *and so* lose himself, or be cast away ? Or what shall a man give as a ransom for his life ? For whosoever is ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also will the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in his own glory, and the glory of his Father, with the holy angels. For *you may certainly depend upon it that* the Son of man shall thus come in his Father's glory, with his angels ; and then shall he recompense every man according to his actions. And he said *further* to them, Verily I tell *it* you as a truth, that there are some of them who stand here, that shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power : *and* the Son of man coming in his kingdom† : *leading on his victorious armies against those who would not admit him to reign over them.*

REFLECTIONS.

Alas, how prone are our foolish souls to *relish and regard the things of men rather than those of God* ! How justly do we deserve the rebuke of our Lord, who, while he speaks to Peter with such abhorrence, after all the *encomiums* he had just been giving him, shews us with what indignation we should reject every motion that would lead us to prefer our own ease or temporal interest, to the glory of God and the happiness of man. We shall never act so mean a part, if we cordially digest the lessons which Christ hath here taught us, and consider of how much greater importance the salvation of the soul is, than the *gain of the whole world* when opposed to it. Let us steadily pursue this maxim of divine wisdom, and with cheerfulness sacrifice every other interest to the views of an eternal felicity.

Does Jesus call us to *deny ourselves* for him ? What difficulties should we not be ready to submit to, what pleasures should we not renounce for him, who *pleased not himself*, that he might shew his love to us ; and *took upon him the form of a servant*, that he might make us *kings and priests unto God* !—Does he require us to *take up our cross and follow him* ? What sufferings should we not be willing to en-

* This word cannot appear too harsh when it is considered, that the tendency of Peter's saying was to obstruct the great design for which Christ came into the world, which none but Satan could desire.

† The expression may include a reference to the giving the Spirit, and the propagation of the gospel ; but chiefly refers to that providential appearance of Christ for the destruction of Jerusalem, so often called *the coming of the Son of man*, and *the day in which he shall be revealed*.

sure for him ; and whither should we not consent to follow him, who has borne the cross for us, and willingly expired on it for our sakes !

A sense of gratitude for past favours might bear us triumphantly through all the opposition we might be called to encounter in his cause ; how much more then may we be animated by the pleasing hope that we shall another day be confessed by Christ in the presence of his Father and of his holy angels. Let us represent to ourselves that august presence, that awful day, whenever a regard to an adulterous and sinful generation would lead us to be ashamed of Christ and of his words. So shall we certainly be brought to see the kingdom of God in its glory ; and if it opens to us in the visions of the future state, we shall have no reason to be anxiously solicitous, though death should remove us from these lower regions before the gospel hath that universal triumph which the word of God encourages his church to expect.

[Here ends the first volume of the original work.]

SECTION XC.

The transfiguration of Christ. MATT. xvii. 1—13. MARK ix. 2—13.
LUKE ix. 28—36.

AND it came to pass after six days (or, including the first and last) about eight days, after these discourses, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John, to an high mountain apart, to pray. And as he was praying, he was transfigured in their presence, and the form of his countenance was changed, so that his face shone like the sun ; and his raiment was white and dazzling ; shining exceedingly white as snow, yea as the light itself, so as no fuller on earth could whiten it. And behold, there appeared to them two men talking with Jesus ; who were Moses the giver, and Elijah the restorer of the law ; who appearing in glory resembling his, spake of his exit, which he was shortly to accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter, and they that were with him, were quite overburdened with sleep ; but being awakened with the splendour, they saw his glory, and the two men that were standing with him.—And it came to pass that, as they were departing from him, Peter answered and said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here ; and if thou pleasest, let us make three tabernacles here ; for thee one, and for Moses one, and one for Elias ; for he knew not what he said, or should say, for they were vastly terrified at this sight.—And as he was speaking thus, behold there came a bright cloud and overshadowed them, and they feared when they entered into the cloud. And behold there came a voice out of the cloud which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard this voice, they fell on their faces, and were exceedingly terrified. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Rise up and be not afraid. And on a sudden, while the voice was uttered, Jesus was found alone ; and lifting up their eyes, and looking round about, they saw no man any more, but Jesus only with themselves. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, that they should tell no one

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what they had seen, unless when the Son of man was risen from the dead. And they laid hold on that word, disputing among themselves what this rising from the dead could mean. And they were silent, *as to what had passed*, and told no one in those days any of the things which they had now seen.

And his disciples, *as they could not doubt but he was the Messiah*, asked him saying, Why then do the scribes, the teachers of the law, say, that Elias must first come *before the Messiah appear*?*. And Jesus replying said unto them, indeed *it appears from scripture* that Elijah shall first come, and regulate all things. And yet how is it also written of the Son of man *himself*,† that he must suffer many things, and be contemptuously rejected? *Which implies that his forerunner also shall be disregarded. And so the event has been. Do not therefore expect another to appear.* But I say to you that Elijah is indeed come already, as it is written of him (*Is. xl. 3. Mal. iii. 1.*) and they did not know him, but have treated him just as they pleased: thus likewise shall the Son of man suffer by them. Then the disciples understood that he spake to them concerning John the Baptist, *who was foretold under the name of Elijah. Mal. iv. 5.*

REFLECTIONS.

How glorious and delightful was this view of our blessed Redeemer, which the apostles had, when he was transfigured before them, clothed, as it were, with the divine *Shekinah*, and shining with a lustre like that of the sun! How pleasing and how edifying must it be to them to see with him *Moses and Elijah*, those two eminent saints who had so many ages ago quitted our world, but whose names they had often read in the sacred records with wonder and reverence! Well might Peter say, *It is good for us to be here.* Well might he be contented to resign his entertainments and his hopes elsewhere, that they might prolong these delightful moments, feasting their eyes with these divine visions, and their minds with these more than human discourses. Nor can we wonder that the scene, transitory as it was, left so abiding a savour on his spirit, that in an epistle which he wrote many years after, and but a little before his death, he should single this story from a thousand others to attest it as he does, and to argue from it. (*2 Pet. i. 16—18.*)—But oh how much more desirable is it to stand upon *mount Zion*, and to behold those brighter glories which our Jesus wears in the heavenly regions! To behold, not merely *Moses and Elijah*, but all the prophets, the apostles, and martyrs; and, in a word, all the saints of God in every age, whether to us personally known or unknown, surrounding him in a radiant circle; and not only to behold them, but to converse with them. *Lord, it is good for us to be there*, in our desires at least, and in our meditations, till thou please to call us to that happy world, and to take us thither, where no drowsiness will cloud our eyes, where no hurry will discompose

* *q. d.* Is this vision that we have now seen of *Elijah* all the coming of that prophet which was to be expected?

† The construction of this verse in the original is as perplexed as almost any in the N. T.

our thoughts ; but where the perfection of holiness, and of love, shall cast out every degree of terror, as well as of sorrow.

In the mean time let us reverently attend to that Saviour who appeared in this majestic form, and who comes 'recommended to us with so many testimonials of his divine authority. He was again declared by a *voice from heaven* to be the *beloved Son of God* ; as such let us *hear him*, receiving all his revelations with the *assurance of faith*, and all his commands with the *obedience of love*. If these sentiments govern our hearts and our lives, the thoughts of *that departure* from this world, which we are *shortly to accomplish*, will be no grief or terror to our souls. Like our blessed Master, we may connect the views of it, and intermix discourse upon it, with the most delightful enjoyments and converse ; nay, it will serve to render them yet more pleasing. For who would not long to be made *conformable to Christ*, even in *his sufferings and death*, if it may be a means of transforming us into the resemblance of his glories !

SECTION XCI.

Christ drives out an evil spirit which had withstood the attempts of his apostles. MATT. xvii. 14—21. MARK ix. 14—29. LUKE ix. 37—43.

AND it came to pass that, on the next day, when they came down from the mountain *on which Christ had been transfigured*, a great crowd of people met him. And being come to *the rest of the disciples*, he saw a great multitude around them, and *some of the scribes* disputing with them. And immediately all the multitude, seeing him, was struck with astonishment *at the rays of glory which remained on his countenance**. And running to him they saluted him *with great marks of respect*. And he asked the scribes, What do you contend with them about ? and a certain man of the multitude, kneeling down to him, answered, and crying out *with a loud voice*, said, Master, I have brought thee my Son, who has a dumb spirit. O Lord, I beseech thee look upon *him* for he is mine only child, and have compassion upon him, for he is lunatic, and grievously tormented : for he often falleth into the fire, and often into the water. And behold, whenever *this* spirit seizes him, he suddenly cries out ; and it convulses him *so* that he foams again *at the mouth*, and gnashes with his teeth, and pines away : and *it is* with great difficulty *that the demon* departs from him, *after* having terribly bruised him. And I brought him to thy disciples, and spake to them *concerning him*, and entreated them to cast him out, and they could not *accomplish it nor* heal him.

Then Jesus said in reply to him, O incredulous and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you ? how long shall I endure you ?

* So we read of *Moses*, that *the skin of his face shone* when he came down from the mount. Ex. xxxiv. 29. 2 Cor. iii. 7.

† At once reproving the weakness of faith in the father and the disciples, as well as the perverseness of the Jewish teachers who were triumphing in their disappointment.

Bring thy son hither to me. And they brought him to him. And immediately as soon as he saw him, while he was yet coming, the *evil spirit* threw him down and convulsed him, and he fell on the ground, and rolled *about* foaming, *till nature was almost exhausted*. And [*Jesus*] asked his father, How long time is it that he hath been thus *afflicted* ? And he said, From his childhood. And it frequently has thrown him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him. But if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us and help us. And Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe—: all things are possible to him that believeth. And immediately the father of the child cried out and said, with tears, Lord, I *do* believe ; help my unbelief. Then Jesus, seeing that the crowd ran together, rebuked the unclean spirit, and said unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit (*for it had deprived this youth of his speech and hearing*) I charge thee come out of him, and enter into him no more. And the *evil spirit*, having cried out and thrown him into violent distortions, came out of him ; and he seemed as one dead, so that many said, He is dead. But Jesus, taking him by the hand, lifted him up, and he arose. And *when he had thus* healed the child, *he* delivered him to his father. And the child was well from that very hour. And they were all astonished at the mighty power of God.

And when he was come into the house, his disciples came to Jesus and asked him privately, Why could not we *prevail over this demon* and expel him ? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief ; for verily I say unto you, if you had faith *but* as a grain of mustard-seed, you might say to this mountain, Remove from this place to that, and it should remove ; and *in a word*, nothing should be impossible to you. But he *further* said to them, This kind of *demons* cannot go forth by any means, unless by prayer and fasting.

REFLECTIONS.

The invidious opposition which these Scribes and Pharisees made to our Lord, and the ill-natured joy they expressed in what they imagined would disgrace his disciples, appears exceeding odious ; and it shews us the fatal effects of ambition, pride, and avarice, when they possess the hearts of those who should be (as these by their office were) teachers of others. Such qualities render those in the number of the most dangerous enemies of mankind, who ought to be its most affectionate friends, and most useful benefactors. May the light of the gospel break in on their souls, and form them to a better temper !

The solicitous concern of this parent, when he saw his child under such sad symptoms of disorder, may surely remind persons in that relation, of the sentiments with which they should view those of their children, who are, in a spiritual sense, under the power of *Satan* : and of the importunity with which they should entreat that the hand of *Christ* may be stretched out for their rescue. A lively exercise of *faith* is greatly to be desired in this and all other applications of this nature. But alas, how often do we find the remainders of a contrary principle ! In how many instances does that compassionate exclamation of the father in this story suit us ? *Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief !* How

difficult is it, in the midst of so much guilt and weakness, of so much perplexity and unworthiness, to believe the promises of forgiveness and preservation, of grace and glory ! Yet we may humbly hope that He, who by his grace has wrought the divine principle in our souls, will maintain it there. Only let it be our concern to oppose these corruptions which would enervate and suppress it. Perhaps there are some of them which will not be driven *but by prayer and fasting*, by deep humiliation, and more than ordinary solemnity and intenseness of devotion. But surely they have little regard to the peace and security of their souls who can allot only a few hasty moments to them when they have whole hours and days to bestow, not only on the labours, but even on the amusements of life.

SECTION XCII.

Christ warns the disciples of his approaching sufferings. He works a miracle for paying the tribute-money. MATT. xvii. 22, &c. MARK ix. 30—33. LUKE ix. 43—45.

AND while every one was amazed at all the things which Jesus did, *he and his apostles* departed from thence and passed through Galilee ; and he was desirous that no one might know it, *lest he should be interrupted*, for while they continued in Galilee, Jesus taught his disciples. And he said unto them, Apply your ears to these sayings ; for the Son of man shall shortly be betrayed* into the hands of men, and they shall put him to death ; but after he is slain he shall rise on the third day.—But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, so that they perceived it not. And yet they were afraid to ask him the meaning of that saying. They perceived however, that he foretold his death, and they were exceeding sorry.

And when they were come to Capernaum, the collectors of the tribute came to Peter and said, Does not your master pay the tribute to the service of the temple † ? He says, Yes. And when he came into the house, Jesus prevented him and said, What dost thou think, Simon ? Of whom do the kings of the earth receive custom or tribute ? of their own sons, or of strangers ? Peter says to him, Of strangers ; Jesus says to him, Then the sons are free ‡. Nevertheless, lest we should offend them, go to the sea, and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up ; and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt there find a Stater (*a piece of Silver coin*||) take that and give them for me and thee.

* MARK, “ is delivered.” What would certainly and quickly be, is often spoken of as already done.

† A *Didrachma* or half shekel ; which *Josephus* says every Jew used to pay yearly. It seems to have been a voluntary thing, which custom had established. In *Nehemiah's* days it was accounted so, when the sum was lower. *Neh. x. 32.*

‡ *q. d.* I therefore, as the Son of God, might plead an exemption.

|| In value about two 1-2 shekels, or, according to *Dr. Prideaux*, near 3s. of our money, though most reckon it but 2s. 6d.

REFLECTIONS.

How slow and untractable were the minds of the apostles, who understood not these plain things when thus inculcated again and again ! But, on the other hand, how much integrity does it shew in the historian to record what seemed so little to the honour of himself and his brethren ! In this respect, and many others, surely credit rises to the gospel, even by occasion of the infirmities of those to whom it was committed, and *out of weakness they are made strong*.—The lenity of our blessed Lord was truly admirable, that he should bear with such stupidity in his disciples with so much gentleness and patience, and should, with so much earnestness, go on to renew his instructions to them. Let us, however, learn to be upon our guard against the prejudices of worldly interest, since, as we see, they may take such strong hold of minds, in the main upright and pious. And therefore let us earnestly pray that God would give us a greater relish for spiritual and eternal blessings.

It cannot surely become us to seek the grandeur and riches of this world, when our blessed Master was so poor, that he could not pay this little tribute without having recourse to a miracle. Yet this he chooses, rather than to give offence by a refusal, how justly soever he might have pleaded an exemption from it. Let us learn from hence that *meekness of wisdom* which will teach us to seek the interest of others rather than our own ; and to consider how we may edify others by the abundance of our good works, rather than how we may excuse ourselves in the omission of any. That extent of knowledge and power which our Lord displayed on this occasion, can never be at a loss for means to repay whatever we may thus sacrifice for his sake.

SECTION XCIII.

Christ reproves his apostles for their contention who should be greatest ; and recommends to them humility and mortification. MARK IX. 33—37, 42, &c. MATT. xviii. 1—9. LUKE IX. 46—48.

WHEN Peter had paid the tribute money, our Lord, from a late occurrence which he had observed, took occasion to recommend humility to his disciples. And being in the house with them, he asked them, About what were you disputing with each other on the way ? But they were silent ; for as they were on the way, a controversy arose among them, and they debated one with another, which of them should be greatest in that temporal monarchy which they expected Jesus as the Messiah to erect. And Jesus perceiving the ambitious thought of their heart, when he was sat down called all the twelve, and says unto them, If any one would be Chief, let him be as the last of all, and the servant of all.

Now at the same time, the disciples came to Jesus, and, finding that he knew the subject of their debate, asked him saying, Who is intended to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven* ? And Jesus hav-

* Matthew's narrative of this story begins here. Perhaps this question would more naturally be inserted previous to our Lord's advice in the foregoing words. Ed.

ing called to him a little child, took and set him in the midst of them. And then taking him in his arms, he said unto them, I assuredly declare unto you, *that* except ye be converted, and become like little children, ye shall by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, HE is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whosoever shall entertain this child, or one of such little children in my name, entertaineth ME; and whosoever shall entertain me, entertains not me *alone*, but him that sent me*; for he that *by such condescension* is the least among you all, He shall be *eminently* great. But whoever shall offend (*or occasion the fall of*) one of these little ones, who believe in me, or *any disciple of mine, though weak as this infant*, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and he should be thrown into the sea, and drowned in the depth of it.

Wo unto the world because of offences; for it is necessary that offences come, but wo to that man by whom the offence cometh. Wherefore, if thy hand offend thee† cut it off and cast it from thee, for it is better for thee to enter maimed into *eternal* life, than having two hands to go into hell, *even* into that fire which shall never be extinguished; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter lame into life, than having two feet to be cast into the inextinguishable fire of hell; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, tear it out and cast it away from thee; it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God, or into *everlasting* life, with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one of *those victims of divine justice*, shall be as it were salted with fire; and every *acceptable* sacrifice shall be seasoned with salt‡, *even that of divine grace*.—Salt is good: but if the salt be grown insipid, with what will you season it? Have *therefore this excellent salt* in yourselves, and maintain peace with each other.

REFLECTIONS.

How deeply is pride rooted in the heart of fallen men; when neither the daily instructions, nor edifying example, of the humble Jesus could prevent it from appearing, even among the apostles themselves, in so mean and unworthy a manner! Still did worldly interest and grandeur so intoxicate their minds, that they seemed even *against hope* to have hoped for it, and to have found out a strange kind of method of grafting these expectations, even on the very cross of Christ, which was intended to destroy them.

How edifying and affecting are these lessons which the meek and lowly Redeemer gave us, with this little child in his arms, whose example we are required to copy! Lord, give us of thy regenerating grace, that we may do it; that we may *be converted, and become as little children*,

* Here Christ was interrupted by a speech of John, related Mark ix. 38—41. for which see § 96.

† See on Matt. v. 30, § 39.

‡ Lev. ii. 13. Rom. xii. 15. xv. 16. 1 Pet. ii. 5.

free from avarice and ambition, malice and prejudice ! How melancholy is it to think that many, who have by their office been employed to read and explain this lesson to others, and who have not been *children in understanding*, seem to have learnt so little of it themselves ; as if it had never been at all intended for that order of men to whom indeed it was immediately addressed ! If there be any such thing yet remaining in the Christian ministry, let them seriously weigh the *wo* denounced on *that man by whom the offence cometh*. May the infinite mercies of God be extended to all professing Christians who give themselves up to worldly pursuits and projects ; and especially to those who make the church of Christ only a kind of porch to the temple of Mammon, and the sacred office itself merely a convenient vehicle for swallowing down riches and honours ! May divine grace deliver us from such fatal snares, and form us to that self-denial and mortification, without which we cannot be the true disciples of Christ ; but, after having *pierced ourselves through with many unnecessary sorrows* here, shall plunge ourselves deep into eternal perdition !

May these repeated and dreadful representations of future misery, which we have now been reading, impress our souls in a becoming manner ! Blessed Jesus ! thou *bringest good tidings* ; yet which of the prophets under the legal dispensation ever represented *the terrors of the Lord* in so awful a light as that in which thou hast placed them ! Let none of thy ministers be afraid to imitate thee therein ! nor let any of thy followers presume to censure them for it ! May we all be effectually warned to *flee from the wrath to come* ; and, as we would not another day be *salted with fire*, may our hearts now be *seasoned with thy grace* ! and may we, by a modest and peaceful, a benevolent and useful life, be daily bearing a testimony to it, and, as *the salt of the earth*, may we be labouring to cure the growing corruption of the world about us !

SECTION XCIV.

Our Lord further enforces condescension and humility, and gives rules for the accommodation of disputes and offences among Christians.
MATT. XVIII. 10—20.

- 10 **J**ESUS proceeded with the discourse which he began with the child in his arms, and said ; Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that their angels in heaven do incessantly behold the face of my heavenly Father. And you have a much greater instance of condescension continually before
- 11 you ; for the Son of man himself came to save that which was lost.—
- 12 What do you think, if a man had an hundred sheep, and one of them should wander ? would he not leave the ninety-nine on the
- 13 mountains, and go out to seek that which is gone astray ? And if he happen to find it, I assuredly say unto you, that it will give him a more sensible joy than the safety of the ninety-nine which had
- 14 not wandered. Even so it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones should be lost.

- 15 Moreover if thy brother sin against thee, go and reprove him
in the most convincing manner thou canst, and let it be done between*
 thee and him alone. If he will hear thee, thou hast gained thy
 16 brother. But if he will not hearken *to thee*, take with thee one
 or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every
 17 word may be established. (*Deut. xix. 15.*) But if he disregard
 them, tell it to the church†; and if he disregard the church, let
 18 him be to thee as an heathen and a publican‡. Verily I say unto
 you, *Such shall be the authority of your decisions, that whatsoever*
 you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever
 19 you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Further I say
 unto you, That if any two of you shall agree together on earth
 concerning any thing which they shall ask *in prayer for the mira-*
culous confirmation of their determinations, it shall be done for them
 20 by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are assembled
 in my name, *with a regard to my authority and my glory*, I am
 there in the midst of them.

REFLECTIONS.

Thus happy are the meanest servants of Christ, in the care and fa-
 four of their heavenly Master, and in the angelic guard which, by his
 high command, are continually attending even the lambs of his flock.
 So condescending are the blessed spirits above, that even the greatest
 of them do not disdain to minister unto the heirs of salvation. Let not
 the wisest and greatest men despise those whom angels honour with
 their guardianship and care; especially since the Son of man, that
 merciful Shepherd, has come forth into this wilderness to save that
 which was lost, and even to seek and recover us when we were gone
 astray, and should otherwise have wandered to our eternal ruin.

What could have been more happy for the church of Christ than
 the observation of this plain and easy rule, which he has given for
 ending disputes among his followers! And yet who, that sees the con-
 duct of the generality of Christians, would imagine they had ever
 heard of such a rule? Instead of this private expostulation, which
 might often bring a debate to a speedy and amicable conclusion, what
 public charges! what passionate complaints! what frequent and la-
 boured attempts to take, if the least scandalous, yet not the least per-
 nicious kind of revenge, by wounding the characters of those whom
 we imagine to have injured us! As for church censures, how lament-
 able is it that they have been so little conformable to this rule, and in
 many instances so contrary to it, in almost every christian nation
 under heaven! Is this the form in which ecclesiastical judgments do
 appear in the Popish or even in the Protestant world? Are these the
 maxims by which they have been, or by which they are determined,
 even by those who claim the largest share in the promises made to

* The word *πεινάζειν* signifies to convince as well as admonish.

† The old English editions render it, the congregation, and I think properly.
 The word signifies in general an assembly. Acts xix. 32, 39. It is commonly
 used for a particular assembly. Acts xiv. 23. 1 Cor. iv. 17, &c.

‡ That text Titus iii. 10, relating to Heretics, may be much illustrated by
 this passage.

the apostles, and boast with the greatest confidence of the presence and authority of Christ with them, to confirm their sentences, and to sanctify perhaps rapine and murder? Vain, wretched confidence! Let us earnestly pray that this dishonour to the christian name may every where be wiped away; and that true religion, and even common humanity, may not with such solemn mockery be destroyed in the name of the Lord.

Let humble submission be always paid to apostolical decisions in every difficulty; and let the promises made to these leaders in the christian church be some encouragement even to us, *on whom the ends of the world are come*. None but an omnipresent, and consequently a divine person, could say, *Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*. His power and his goodness can never be impaired; let it therefore be an encouragement to social prayer: and let the remembrance of our Redeemer's continued presence and inspection, engage us to behave ourselves agreeably to the relation that we claim to him, and to those expectations from him which we profess.

SECTION XCV.

The parable of the unmerciful servant. MATT. xviii. 21, &c.

- 21 **T**HEN *when Jesus had given this advice for the accommodation of differences*, Peter came to him and said, Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he offend against me?—until seven times?
- 22 Jesus says to him, 'I do not say to thee, Till seven times, but till
- 23 seventy times seven. For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be likened to, *or illustrated by*, a certain king, who determined
- 24 to settle an account with his servants. And when he began to reckon *with them*, there was brought to him one who owed him
- 25 ten thousand talents. And as he had nothing to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold *for a slave*, and his wife and children, and
- 26 all that he had, and payment to be made *with the price*. The servant therefore falling down, prostrated himself at his feet, and
- 27 said, lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant being melted with compassion, discharged
- 28 him, and forgave him the debt. But as that servant went out, he met one of his fellow servants, who owed him an hundred pence; and laying hold of him by the throat, he said, Pay me
- 29 that which thou owest *me*. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and entreated him saying, Have patience with me, and
- 30 I will pay thee all. And he would not; but cast him into prison till he should pay the debt.
- 31 And when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were exceedingly grieved, and came and gave their lord an exact account of the whole matter. Then his lord, having called him
- 32 *again*, said unto him, Thou wicked slave! I forgave thee all that debt because thou didst entreat my pity: Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had com-

34 passion on thee? And his lord being incensed, delivered him to the tormentors *to fether and scourge him** till he should pay all that
 35 was due to him. Thus also will my heavenly Father deal with you, if you do not every one *of you* from your hearts forgive his brother his trespasses.

REFLECTIONS.

How unreasonable and how odious does a severe and uncharitable temper appear, when we view it in the light of this parable! Yet what light can be more just than this? We are indebted to God more than *ten thousand talents*; from our infancy we begin to contract the debt, and are daily increasing it in our ripening years: justly, therefore, might he cast us into the prison of hell till we *paid the uttermost farthing*. And were we to fall at his feet, with a promise of *paying him all* on his patient forbearance, it must be the language of gross ignorance, or of presumptuous folly, when addressed to a Being who knows our poverty, and knows that, in consequence of it, we are utterly incapable of making him any amends. But he magnifies his grace in the kind offers of a free forgiveness; and shall we who receive it, and hold our lives and all our hope by it, take our brethren by the throat, because they owe us *a few pence*? or shall we carry along with us deep, continued resentment, glowing like a hidden fire in our bosoms? God forbid! For surely if we do so, *out of our own mouth shall we be condemned*, while we acknowledge the justice of the sentence here passed against this cruel servant.

Christ himself has made the application: *so shall my heavenly father deal with you, if you do not forgive your brethren*: and he has instructed us elsewhere to ask forgiveness only as we grant it; (*Matt. vi. 14, 15.*) Let us then from this moment discharge our hearts of every sentiment of *rancour* and *revenge*, nor ever allow a *word*, or even a *wish*, that savours of it. And as ever we hope our addresses to the throne of divine mercy should meet with a favourable audience, let us *lift up holy hands, without wrath, as well as without doubting*.

SECTION XCVI.

Christ reproves John for prohibiting one who cast out demons in his name, because he was not of their company. MARK ix. 38—41. LUKE ix. 49, 50.

38 **I**N the midst of the preceding discourse, the apostle John interrupted our Lord†, when urging a readiness to receive one of the least of his servants in his name, and answered him, Master, we

* In the eastern part of the world imprisonment is in many cases attended with severe corporal punishment. See § 32.

† Mark ix. 37. § 93. Perhaps John thus interrupted our Lord, being desirous of diverting him from a subject on which he was conscious of having deserved blame, or thinking it might receive some further illustration by his remarks.

saw one casting out demons in thy name*, who does not follow us, and we forbade him *to do it any more*, because he does not follow
 39 among us, *and never had any commission from thee*. But Jesus said unto him, Do not forbid or hinder him; for there is no man who shall work a miracle in my name that can quickly, or on any slight occasion, speak evil of me. *Be his regard to my name ever*
 40 *so imperfect, I would not now discourage one who acts thus*; for
 41 whosoever is not against us is for us†. For whosoever shall present you with a cup of water in my name, because you belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, He shall not lose his reward.

REFLECTIONS.

It is sad that *the spirit* which remains in so many Christians, and in this instance appeared even in the beloved Saint John, should (as the apostle *James* expresses it) *lust unto envy*: How ill does that spirit become a disciple, and much more a minister, of the benevolent Jesus! The apostle Paul had learnt, and taught, a better temper, when he rejoiced that *Christ was preached*, even by those who were his personal enemies. *To seek our own glory, is not glory*; and to confine religion to them that *follow us*, is a narrowness of spirit which we should avoid and abhor. Christ here gives us a lovely example of candour and moderation: he was willing to put the best construction on dubious cases, and to treat those as *friends* who were not avowed and declared *enemies*. Perhaps in this instance it might be a means of overcoming a remainder of prejudice, and perfecting what was wanting in the faith and obedience of the persons in question: at least it suited the present state of things, in which men are to be judged of by their professions and actions, as their hearts cannot immediately and certainly be known.

But let us *judge ourselves* with greater severity, remembering there is an approaching day, *in which the secrets of all hearts will be made manifest*; in which those, who have indeed been *neuters* in the war between Christ and Satan, will be treated as *enemies*; and those other words will be fulfilled, *He that is not with me is against me*; and *he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad*. In that day, may the sincerity of our hearts be discovered, and then we may rejoice in this repeated assurance, that the least of our services shall be kindly remembered, and abundantly rewarded according to the riches of divine bounty and grace.

* Probably this was a case resembling that of the three sons of Sceva, *Acts* xix. 13. God might now grant that efficacy to their adjurations which he denied after the descent of the Spirit. Dr. Clarke supposes this man to have been a disciple of John the Baptist.

† Our Lord had formerly said, "He that is not with me is against me:" by which he meant, that he admitted of no neutrality, and that they who were indifferent to him would be finally treated as enemies, § 61. Here he very consistently uses a seemingly opposite proverb, directing his disciples to judge of *other men's* characters in the most candid manner, and charitably to hope that they who did not oppose his cause, wished well to it.

SECTION XCVII.

Our Lord sends out the seventy disciples with large instructions, like those he had before given to the twelve apostles. LUKE x. 1—16.

- 1 **A**FTER these things, the Lord fixed upon seventy others of *his disciples* also, and sent them before him; two and two *together*, into every city, and *more private* place, into which he himself intended *shortly* to come ; *instructing them as he had done the apostles.*
- 2 He said therefore to them, The harvest is indeed great, but the labourers are few ; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest,
- 3 that he would thrust forth *more* labourers into his harvest. Go your ways : behold I send you forth as lambs in the midst of
- 4 wolves. Carry not *with you any* purse, nor scrip *for your provisions*, nor shoes but *what you have on*, nor *stay* to salute any man
- 5 by the way. And into whatever house you come, first say, Peace
- 6 be unto this house. And if any son of peace (*any good man worthy such blessings*) be there, your peace shall rest upon it ; *your prayer shall be answered* : but if not, it shall return upon you.
- 7 And continue in the same house, eating and drinking what you find with them ; for the labourer is worthy of his reward. Do not go from one house to another *in hope of better accommodations.*
- 8 And into whatever city you come, and they entertain you, eat
- 9 such things as are set before you *without any difficulty.* And heal the sick that are in it, and say to them, The kingdom of God is come near unto you.
- 10 But into whatsoever city you come, and they do not entertain
- 11 you, go out into the streets of it and say, We wipe off against you even the very dust of your city which cleaves to us ; nevertheless, know this assuredly, that the kingdom of God is come near unto
- 12 you. And I say unto you, That in that day it shall be more tolerable for Sodom *itself* than for that city. Wo unto thee O Chorazin ! Wo unto thee O Bethsaida ! for if the wonders which have been wrought in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon they would
- 14 have repented long since, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than
- 15 for you. And thou O Capernaum, who hast been lifted up to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell. *Then turning to the seventy, he said,* He that heareth you, heareth me ; and he that rejecteth you, rejecteth me ; and he that rejecteth me, rejecteth him that sent me.

REFLECTIONS.

So unwilling was the blessed Jesus to give over his kind attempts for men's salvation ! He projected another circuit through the country, and sends forth other messengers, more numerous than the former company. He renews his invitations to perishing sinners, and his lamentations over those who had hitherto *rejected the counsel of God against themselves.* Thus let us love the souls of men ; thus let us use repeated endeavours to deliver them ; endeavours which would

probably be much more successful than they are, if these wise and gracious directions of Christ to his ministers were more attentively observed by those who are honoured with that important office.

Let all such *cast their care upon God* ; let them go forth cheerfully in a dependence on his protection and favour ; let them carry about with them hearts full of affection for the whole human race, seeking and praying for the peace of all around them ; cheerfully *contenting themselves with such things as they have* ; and neither pursuing the grandeurs nor the delicacies of life with any eager attachment.

Send forth, O Lord, such labourers into thine harvest, and animate them to a becoming zeal in their work, by a deep sense of that dreadful condemnation which those will incur who, despising them, pour contempt on their divine Master, and his heavenly Father, in whose name he was sent ! May God preserve our country from that guilt and ruin ! *The kingdom of God is come nigh unto us*, and we are *lifted up to heaven* by our privileges : may we not after all, *be cast down to hell* for the abuse of them ! but may divine grace make such a way for the gospel into our hearts, that we may cordially receive all who faithfully proclaim it, and bid them welcome in the name of the Lord !

SECTION XCVIII.

Christ discourses with his brethren about his going up to the feast of tabernacles. JOHN vii. 1—13.

- 1 **A**FTER these things, Jesus *for some time* walked in Galilee ;
- 2 for he would not *then* walk in Judea because the Jews sought
- 3 to slay him. And a feast of the Jews was then near, *called the*
- 4 feast of the tabernacles. Therefore his brethren said unto him,
- 5 Remove from hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also *who*
- 6 *are there* may see the works which thou performest. For no man
- 7 will act any thing in secret, that is himself desirous to be public-
- 8 ly known. If thou *really* performest these things *which we see at*
- 9 *home by a divine commission, go up to Jerusalem* and manifest thy-
- 10 self to the world : for neither did his brethren believe in him.—
- 11 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come : but your
- 12 time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but me it hates,
- 13 because I bear my testimony concerning it, that its deeds are
- 14 evil. Do you *therefore* go up to this feast, *without waiting for me* :
- 15 I do not go up to the feast yet* ; for my time is not yet fully
- 16 come.
- 17 Now when he had said these things unto them, he continued
- 18 still in Galilee. But when his brethren were gone up, then he
- 19 also *himself after a few days* went up to the feast ; not publicly,
- 20 as he had often done, but as it were in secret. The Jews therefore

* It is doubtful whether this word was in the oldest copies, as *Porphyry* charges Christ here with falsehood. [It is here transposed as it reads better last.]

- sought for him at *the beginning of the feast, and not seeing him as*
 12 *usual*, said, Where is he? And there was a great murmuring
 among the people concerning him; for some said, Surely he is a
 good man; but others said, Nay, but he seduces the populace.
 13 Howbeit, no one *that thought favourably of him* spoke his mind
 with freedom concerning him, for fear of the Jews.

REFLECTIONS.

We see how little the greatest external advantages can do without the divine blessing, when some of the nearest relations of Christ himself, by whom he had been most intimately known, were not prevailed upon to believe in him. Who then can wonder if some remain incorrigible in the most regular and pious families? How much more valuable is the union to him, which is founded on a cordial and obedient faith, than that which arose from the bands of nature? and how cautiously should we watch against those carnal prejudices by which even the *brethren of Christ* were alienated from him?

Our Lord, we see, used a prudent care to avoid persecution and danger till *his time was fully come*; and it is our duty to endeavour, by all wise and upright precautions, to secure and preserve ourselves, that we may have opportunities for further service. In the course of such service we must expect (especially if we appear under a public character) to meet with a variety of censures; but let us remember that Jesus himself went *through evil report and good report*; by some applauded as *a good man*, but by others, and those the greater part of his countrymen, condemned as *deceiving the people*. Let us learn of Christ patiently to endure such injurious treatment: and endeavour to behave ourselves so, that we may have a testimony in the consciences of men, and in the presence of God, that, after the example of our great Master, *in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world*. Then will our names be had in remembrance, and the honour and reward of our faithful obedience continue when the memories of those that reviled us are perished with them.

SECTION XCIX.

Christ, at the feast of tabernacles, vindicates his conduct, and further urges the proofs of his divine mission. JOHN VII. 14—24.

- 14 **N**OW in the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the tem-
 15 ple and taught. And the Jews *who heard him* were amazed,
 saying, How does this man understand letters, having never lear-
 16 ned? Jesus answered them and said, My doctrine is not mine
 17 *own*, but his that sent me. If any one be determined to do his will
 he shall understand whether my doctrine be of God, or whe-
 18 ther I speak of myself*. He that speaks of himself, is seeking

* This passage seems an express declaration that every upright man, to whom the gospel is proposed, will see and own the evidence of its divine authority.

- his own glory ; but he that seeks the glory of him that sent him,
 19 He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him. Hath not
 Moses given you the law ? And yet none of you observes the law.
He has given you that precept, "Thou shalt not kill ;" wherefore
 20 then do you go about to kill me ? The multitude answered and
 said, Thou art possessed and distracted to talk thus : who goes
 21 about to kill thee ? Jesus answered and said unto them, I have
 some time ago performed one remarkable work (*viz. at the pool of*
Bethesda) and you all to this day wonder on account of it, *that I*
should order the man I cured to carry his couch on the sabbath.
 22 Your cavil is unreasonable on your own principles ; for Moses gave
 you a precept which required circumcision (not that it is originally
 of Moses, but of the fathers, ages before Moses was born) and
 you scruple not to circumcise a man child on the sabbath-day, *if it*
 23 *be the eighth from his birth.* If then to prevent the violation of
 Moses's law, by deferring this right, you acknowledge it fit that
 a man receive circumcision on the sabbath, Why are you incensed
 against me that I have cured a man entirely† on the sabbath ?
 and to manifest the perfection of the cure, commanded him to carry
 24 his couch ? Judge not according to appearance, but judge right-
 eously judgment.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us learn of our meek and humble Master to refer the honour of all we know and do to divine instructions communicated to us, and divine grace working in and by us ; that, seeking the glory of God, we may have the surest evidence that we are truly his. Let us on all occasions remember that integrity and uprightness will be a certain security to us against dangerous mistakes in matters of religion. If the light we already have be faithfully improved, we may humbly hope that more will be given in ; nor shall we then fail of convincing evidence that the gospel-doctrine is of God ; for the experience of its power on our hearts will check our passions, and destroy the prejudices that would prevent the truth from taking place in our minds.

Let us receive his doctrine as divine, and hearken unto Christ as sent of God ; and whatsoever be the vile reproaches we may meet with from a wicked world, and the malicious designs it may form against us, let us be resolute and steadfast in the practice of the duties he has taught us, that *with well-doing we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* Our Lord was reviled as a demoniac and a lunatic ; but instead of rendering railing for railing, he replied in the words of gentleness and sobriety. So let us endeavour to conquer the rudeness of those attacks we may meet with in his cause ; that we may, if possible, remove the prejudices so fatal to those that entertain them, and form men to that equitable and impartial judgment which would soon turn all their cavils against Christ into admiration, praise, and obedience.

† Or, made a man sound throughout : literally, I have healed a whole man, [not only removed his disorders, but at once perfectly recovered his strength.]

SECTION C.

The Jews pass various censures on Christ ; and the sanhedrim send officers to seize him, but without effect. JOHN vii. 25—36.

25 **T**HEN while our Lord was thus discoursing, some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem said, Is not this he whom they seek
 26 to put to death ? But behold he speaks openly, and they do not say any thing to him. Do the rulers indeed know that this is really the Messiah ? But we *many of us* know this man, whence he is ; whereas, when the Messiah comes no man will know whence
 27 he is. Then Jesus as he was teaching in the temple, cried out and said, Do ye indeed both know me, and know whence I am ? *It is great rashness and folly to assert it ; yet it is certain I am not come of myself ; but he who sent me is true, whom ye know*
 28 not. But I know him, for I am from him, and he hath sent me.
 29 Then they sought *opportunity* to seize him ; but no one laid hands
 30 on him, because his hour was not yet come. And many of the people *were so much affected with his discourse that they secretly believed on him, and said to each other, When the Messiah comes will he do greater miracles than these which this Jesus has done ?*
 31 The Pharisees, *when they heard that the people whispered such things concerning him, were displeased and alarmed ; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to seize him, as he preached.* Then Jesus said to them, *as soon as they appeared,*
 32 Yet a little while I am with you, and *then* I go to him that sent me. You shall seek me and shall not find me ; and where I am
 33 you cannot come. The Jews therefore said among themselves, Whither is he about to go, that we shall not find him ? Will he go to the dispersed among the Greeks, *after being rejected by his own*
 34 nation, and teach the Greeks, *the idolatrous Gentiles ?* What sort of saying is this which he has spoken, " You shall seek me and shall not find me, and where I am you cannot come ? " *Thus they cavilled at his words, yet were so over-awed by his presence that they did not offer him any violence.*

REFLECTIONS.

So confident is error in its own decisions, and so vain in its self-applauses ! These unhappy people, every way mistaken, censure their rulers for a supposed credulity, in seeming, as it were, to acquiesce in Christ's claim to be the Messiah ; and imagined themselves, no doubt, exceeding wise in rejecting him, while they blindly took it for granted he was the son of Joseph, and had not patience to wait for the authentic story of his miraculous conception. Surely men had need to look well to the force of those arguments on which they venture their souls by rejecting the gospel. Our Lord answered their secret reasoning in a manner which might justly have alarmed them, charging them with ignorance of that God whom they pretended to know, and whom, with a presumptuous confidence, they claimed as theirs. And oh, that it may not be found at last, that many who have

appeared most confident of their interest in God, neither know him, nor are known by him !

The blessed Jesus, who is *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person*, has the completest knowledge of the Father. May we be so wise and happy as to seek instructions from him, *that the eyes of our understandings may be enlightened*, and the temper of our hearts proportionably regulated, by all the discoveries of the Divine Being which he makes ! How obstinate and desperately hardened were the hearts of those who, notwithstanding all the proofs that Jesus gave of his divine mission, were yet so far from hearkening to him, as to seek opportunities to destroy him ! So dangerous and fatal is the prevalence of error, in such as *like not to retain God in their knowledge*, that they will even venture on the greatest wickedness, when once they are *given over to a reprobate mind*.—May God preserve us from a *spirit of delusion*, and fill us with that wisdom, that we may *know the things belonging to our peace* ; and, being ready to *receive the truth in the love of it*, may we acknowledge and attend to Christ as sent of God !—May we learn this heavenly wisdom in time, since the hour is approaching when Christ will be *sought in vain*, and all correspondence between him and sinners will be finally cut off ! *Where he is they cannot then come* ; and to be excluded from him will at length appear insupportable misery, even to those who, with proud folly and fatal self-sufficiency, are now most ready to say unto him *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thee or thy ways*.

SECTION CI.

Christ's gracious invitation on the last day of the feast : the officers return to the sanhedrim without him ; where a debate arises between them and Nicodemus. JOHN vii. 37, &c.

- 37 **I**N the last day, that great day of the feast, of tabernacles*.
 (when it was customary to draw water out of the fountain of Siloam, and pour it before the Lord in the temple) Jesus stood and proclaimed saying, If a man thirst, let him come unto me
 38 and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath in many places said, shall not only be refreshed himself, but, out of his belly, (or from within him) shall flow rivers of living water.—
 39 Now this he spake of the Spirit, which they who believed on him should receive : for the holy Spirit, was not yet given, because
 40 Jesus was not yet glorified. Then many of the people, when they heard this saying of Jesus, said, surely this is a prophet.
 41 Others said, This is the Messiah. But some said, Shall the Mes-
 42 siah come out of Galilee ? Hath not the scripture said that the Messiah is to come from the seed of David, and from the town

* See Lev. xxiii. 34—36. Numb. xxix. 35. The custom above-mentioned, some Jewish writers say, was meant as a way of invoking the influences of the blessed Spirit. The context favours this supposition. See *Lightfoot* and *Tremellius*.

- 43 of Bethlehem, where David was *born* ? Thus there was a dissen-
 44 tion among the people on his account. And some of them would
 have seized him ; but *they were so far restrained that no man laid*
hands on him.
- 45 Then the officers came *back* to the chief priests and Pharisees :
 and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him *with you* ?
 46 The officers replied, No man ever spake as this man doth*.
 47 Then the Pharisees answered them, Are you also deceived ? *Sure-*
 48 *ly you cannot be thus infatuated.* Have any of the rulers believed
 49 on him, or any of the Pharisees ?—But this people *who are so en-*
chanted with him, who know not the law, are cursed.
- 50 *Upon this,* Nicodemus, who came to *Jesus* by night, being one
 of them, *both a ruler and a Pharisee,* took so much courage that he
 51 said to them, Doth our law judge any man before it hear him,
 52 and know what he hath done ? They answered him *only by say-*
ing, What, art thou also of Galilee ? Search and see, for no
 53 prophet is raised up from Galilee†. And *having said this,* they
broke up the court, and every man went to his own house.

REFLECTIONS.

With what delight and thankfulness should we hear this gracious proclamation of Christ, which he now made in the temple, and a while after repeated from the throne of his glory ! *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink ; yea, whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.* Blessed Jesus, had we been allowed to have prescribed to thee a form of words, in which thy kind purposes towards us should have been expressed, what could we have invented more pathetic, more condescending, or more reviving !—May we *thirst* for the blessings of thy grace, and in the confidence of faith apply unto thee for them ; and particularly for these communications of thy *Spirit*, which are so highly excellent and desirable, and indeed so necessary for us ! Supply us with them, we entreat thee in so rich an abundance, that we, in our different spheres, may supply others, and from us there may *flow rivers of living water* !

Well might such *gracious words* as these disarm the rage of enemies and persecutors. Let us add our testimony to theirs, and say, *Never man spake as Jesus speaks.* Let us hear him with calm and thankful attention, while his voice still sounds in his word. Happy are those that know the joyful sound ! The Pharisees, like *deaf adders,* stopped their ears against the voice of the Charmer ; and, while they proudly censured the populace as a brutal herd, and gloried in their own superior wisdom, *rejected the counsel of God ;* rashly judging

* *Plutarch* mentions it as a proof of the extraordinary eloquence of *Mark Antony*, when *Marius* sent soldiers to kill him, that when he began to plead for his life, he disarmed their resolution and melted them into tears. But these officers are thus vanquished merely by hearing Christ's gracious discourses to the people.

† The answer was mean and trifling, and the abrupt manner of breaking up the assembly intimates their consciousness that it would not bear examination.

without serious inquiry, and weakly borne down by vulgar, senseless prejudices against names and places, which is all the senate of Israel opposes to the solid argument of *Nicodemus* ! That good man, already considerably improved by his interview with Jesus, was undoubtedly confirmed in his adherence to him, by observing the methods of their opposition : and where magistrates arm their authority to overbear argument, they will probably, in the judgment of impartial men, produce a suspicion, at least, that they know their cause to be incapable of a rational defence.

SECTION CII.

Christ, having spent the night in retirement, returns to the temple, where an adulteress is brought before him. JOHN VIII. 1—11.

- 1 **W**HEN the assembly thus broke up, Jesus went to the mount
 2 of Olives. But he returned to the temple early in the
 3 morning, and all the people came to him ; and sitting down he
 4 instructed them *as usual*. And the Scribes and Pharisees brought
 5 to him a woman taken in adultery. And setting her in the midst,
 6 they said unto him, Master, this woman was taken in the very act
 7 of adultery. Now Moses in the law has commanded us that such
 8 women should be stoned. What therefore dost thou say ? This
 9 they said tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But
 10 Jesus, stooping down, wrote on the ground with his finger [as
 11 though he heard them not*]. But as they continued asking him,
 he raised himself up, and said to them, Let him of you that is
 without sin, throw the first stone at her. And stooping down
 again, he wrote on the ground *as before*. But having heard *his*
answer, and being convicted in their consciences, they went out
 one by one, beginning from the eldest†, even to the last. And
 Jesus was left alone *by all the accusers*, and the woman standing in
 the midst of the crowd. And Jesus raising himself up, and seeing
 none but the woman, said unto her, Woman, where are those
 thine accusers ? Has no man condemned thee ? *is there none re-*
maining to bear witness against thee ? And she said, No man,
 Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I, *under this circum-*
stance judicially condemn thee. Go thy way, *therefore*, and sin
 no more.

REFLECTIONS.

The devout retirements of Christ, and his early renewed labours, so often come in view, that, after having made some progress in his

* [As this clause is wanting in some of the best manuscripts, the author had omitted it.]—The whole story is wanting in the Syriac version, in the Alexandrian, the Bodleian, and other ancient MSS. But I acquiesce in the arguments of Dr. Mill to prove it authentic. [The objection to it, that it represents our Lord as making light of a heinous sin, is utterly groundless.] See *Luke* xii. 13. See also p. 182, Note *.

† This only intimates that those elders of the people who had been most eager in the prosecution, were some of the first that left the assembly.

history, we are ready to pass them over as things of course. But let us remember, that in some degree they call upon us *to go and do likewise*; and will another day condemn those who, while they call themselves his disciples, are given up to ease and luxury, and suffer every little amusement or sensual gratification to lead them into an omission of their duty to God and their fellow creatures; an omission especially aggravated in those whom he has appointed to be teachers of others, and who have therefore so many peculiar errands to the throne of grace, and so many engagements *in the morning to sow, or to prepare the seed of religious instruction, and in the evening not to withhold their hand from dispensing it.*

While Jesus is teaching, his enemies address him, not only as an instructor, but as a *judge*: and yet, by this specious form of honour and respect, they sought only to *ensnare and destroy him*. So unsafe would it be always to judge of men's intentions by the first appearances of their actions. But our Lord, in his answer, united, as usual, the *wisdom of the serpent* with the *innocence and gentleness of the dove*; and in his conduct to this criminal, shewed at once that tenderness and faithfulness which might have the most effectual tendency to impress and reclaim her; if a heart capable of such infidelity and wickedness could be impressed and reclaimed at all. *Go thy way*, said he to this adulteress, *and sin no more*. Perhaps the charge may have little weight with such abandoned transgressors as she; but let all learn to improve their escapes from danger, and the continued exercise of divine patience towards them, as an engagement to speedy and thorough reformation.

Let the *force of conscience*, and the power of Christ over it (both which so evidently appeared in this instance) teach us to reverence the dictates of our own minds, and to do nothing to bring them under a sense of guilt; which, through the secret energy of our Redeemer, wrought so powerfully on these Pharisees, that, hypocritical and vain-glorious as they were, they could not command themselves so far as even to save appearances; but the eldest and gravest among them were the first to confess their guilt, by withdrawing from the presence of so holy a Prophet, from the temple of God, and from the criminal whom they came to prosecute. A like consciousness of being ourselves to blame will abate the boldness and freedom of our proceedings with others for their faults, if, while we judge them, we are *self-condemned*; nor will the authority of a superior age or station of life bear us out against these inward reproaches.

SECTION CIII.

Our Lord speaks of himself as the light of the world, urges the testimony of his Father, and warns the Jews of the danger of persisting in their infidelity, JOHN viii. 12—29.

12 **T**HEN Jesus, after dismissing the adulteress, observing the sun lately risen, again spake unto them saying, I am the light of

- the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest witness of thyself, *therefore thy testimony is not to be admitted as true.* Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear witness of myself, yet my testimony is true, for I know from whence I came and whither I am going; *but though I have often declared it, you know not from whence I come or whither I am going.* You judge according to the flesh, *and will believe nothing in opposition to your carnal principles; but I now judge no man*.* Yet if I should judge, my sentence is true, for I am not alone *in what I say*, but I and the Father that sent me *concur in the testimony I give.* And it is written in your law, that the testimony of two men is *to be admitted as true.* Now I am one, who bear witness of myself, and the Father who sent me is another, *who also bears testimony to me.*
- Then said they to him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, You neither know me nor my Father: if you had known me you would also have known my Father.—These words Jesus spake as he was teaching in the temple, in the treasury; yet no one seized him, because his hour was not yet come. Jesus then said to them again, I am going away and you shall seek me, and *inquire after the Messiah in vain, but as a just punishment for rejecting me you shall die in your sin: for you cannot come whither I am going.* The Jews then said, Will he kill himself, that he says, You cannot come whither I am going? And he said to them, You are from beneath, I am from above: you are of this world, *but I am not of this world.* Therefore I said unto you that you shall die in your sins; for if you believe not that I am *HE* you shall die in your sins.
- Then said they to him, Who art thou? And Jesus [*waving a direct answer*] said to them, Truly†, because I am speaking to you, I have many things to say and judge concerning you, but, *for the present I will only remind you that*, he who sent me is true; and I speak to the world *only those things which I have heard from him.* Yet they did not understand that he spake to them of the Father. Jesus therefore said to them, When you shall have lifted up the Son of man, you shall then know that I am *HE*, and ~~that~~ I can do nothing of myself, but speak these things according as my Father has instructed me. And he that sent me is with me: the Father has not left me alone, for I always do the things which are pleasing to him.

* Christ appeared under the character of a Saviour rather than of a judge. Compare ch. iii. 17.

† The common translation is not just and grammatical. *ἡ ἀρχὴ* (rendered *from the beginning*) often signifies *indeed* or *truly*. The difficulty of the passage arises from the pointing. [The above sense however is not very clear. Wakefield translates it thus: *I have indeed, as I assure you, many things to say of you and to condemn in you.*]

REFLECTIONS.

Such may our character ever be, as we desire the supports of the divine presence ! Whoever be displeased, may we *always do the things which please him* ; and with all diligence let us *labour, whether present, in the body, or absent from it, to be still approved and accepted of him !*

Our blessed Redeemer is *the light of the world*. With how much pleasure should we behold his rays ! With how much cheerfulness should we follow, whithersoever he leads us ; as well knowing that we shall not then *walk in darkness* ; and God forbid we should ever choose to continue in it, as the shelter and skreen of wicked works ! May we, with all candour and humility, regard and submit to the *testimony which the Father has borne to him* in so express and incontestable a manner ! Dreadful would be the consequence of our refusing to do it. The doom of these wretched *Jews* would be ours, *to die in our sins*. And oh, how insupportable will that guilty burden prove in a dying hour, and before the tribunal of God ! How will it sink us into condemnation and despair ! In vain shall those who now despise him then seek admittance to the world where he is : *thither they cannot come* ; and if excluded from him, must be excluded from happiness.

Justly might it long since have been our case : for surely he *has many things to say of us, and to judge concerning us*, should he lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, after his having been *so long with us*, yea, after we have, as it were, seen him *lifted up and set forth as crucified among us*. May this faithful admonition prevail to our conviction and reformation ; that our everlasting condemnation may not further illustrate the reasonableness, yea, the necessity, of it, and the madness of hardening our hearts against it !

SECTION CIV.

Our Lord continues his discourse with the Jews, to convince them how vain their pretences were to liberty and to the privileges of the children of Abraham, while they rejected and persecuted him. JOHN VIII. 30—47.

- 30 **A**ND as he was speaking these words to warn the *Jews* of the
 31 danger of rejecting him, many believed in him. Then Jesus, knowing the difficulties which would lie in their way if they attempted to follow him, said to those Jews who professed that they believed in him, If you continue in my word, then are you my
 32 disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth
 33 shall make you free.—*Some that heard him were displeased at this insinuation ; and they answered him, We are the seed of Abraham, and have never been in slavery to any man : how then dost*
 34 *thou say, You shall be made free ?* Jesus answered them, Verily, verily I say unto you, that every one which practises sin, is the
 35 slave of sin. Now the servant does not always abide in the family ; but may be dismissed at his master's pleasure ; and you being

the servants not of God, but of sin, cannot promise yourselves the continuance of your privileges as the descendants of Abraham : but the Son abides always, Thus do I, the Son of God, who have the
 36 *power of receiving whom I will. If therefore I the Son make you*
 37 *free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are the posterity*
of Abraham ; but what can that avail you while you are so unlike him
 38 *that you seek to kill me because my word has no place in you. I*
speak that which I have seen with my Father, and you do that
 39 *which you have seen with your father.—They replied with warmth*
and said, Abraham is our father. Jesus says to them, If you were in-
deed the children of Abraham, you would do the works of Abra-
 40 *ham. But now you seek to slay me, a man who has told you the*
 41 *truth which I have heard from God. Abraham did not this. Ye*
do the works of your father.—Then said they to him, We are not
 42 *born of fornication : we have all one father, which is God. Jesus*
said to them, If God were indeed your father, you would love me,
for I proceeded, and do come to you from God ; for I came not
 43 *of myself, but He has sent me. Why do you not understand my*
language ? It is because you cannot hear my word ? The case is
 44 *plain : you are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father*
you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and contin-
ued not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he
speaks a lie, he speaks of his own, for he is a liar himself and the
 45 *father [of lying] being the first forger of it. And you, being*
under the influence of this false spirit, because I speak the truth
 46 *you do not believe me. Which of you convinces me of sin ? But*
 47 *if I speak the truth, why do ye not believe me ? He that is of God,*
hears the words of God ; therefore you do not hear mine because
you are not of God.

REFLECTIONS.

May we approve ourselves the sincere disciples of Jesus, by *continuing in his word*, and being *faithful even unto death*, as ever we expect a *crown of life* ! Without this, external privileges will turn to but little account. The *children of Abraham* may be the *children of Satan* ; and they are so, if they imitate the temper and works of the accursed fiend, rather than of the holy patriarch. *The devil was from the beginning a liar and a murderer* ; and all falsehood and malice are from him. Let us earnestly pray that we may be freed from them, and from the tyranny of every other sin to which we have been enslaved ; that *Christ, the Son*, may make us free of his Father's Family, and of his heavenly kingdom ! Then we *shall be free indeed*, and no more be reduced to bondage.

May we prove that we are the *children of God* by our readiness to *hear and receive the words* of our blessed Redeemer, the words of incarnate truth, and wisdom, and love ; whom none of his enemies could ever *convict of sin*, nor ever accused him of it, but to their own confusion ! May we resemble him in the innocence and holiness of his life ; that we may the more easily and gracefully imitate that courage and zeal with which he reproved the haughtiest sinners, and

bore his testimony against the errors and vices of that degenerate age and nation in which he lived!

SECTION CV.

Jesus promising immortality to his followers, and speaking of his own existence as prior to that of Abraham, the Jews attempt to stone him.
JOHN VIII. 48, &c.

48 **N**OW when the Jews heard Jesus declare that they were the children of the devil, they answered him therefore with great rage, and said unto him, Do we not well say that thou art a Samaritan, and art possessed by a demon? Jesus meekly answered, I am not a demoniac: but I honour my Father, and therefore you dishonour me. But I seek not my own glory: nevertheless there is one that seeketh it, and now judgeth of all that pass. Verily, verily I say unto you, If any one keep my word, he shall never see death. Then the Jews said to him, Now we know that thou hast a demon: for Abraham is dead, and all the prophets, yet thou sayest, If any one keep my word he shall never taste of death: Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? and the prophets who also are dead? Whom dost thou pretend thyself to be? Jesus replied, If I only glorify myself, my glory is nothing: but it is my Father that glorifies me, of whom you say that he is your God. Yet ye have not known him; and if I should say that I know him not I should be a liar like you: but I know him and keep his word. Your father Abraham was transported with a desire that he might see my day, and he saw it, and rejoiced.—Then the Jews said unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, before Abraham was born I am. Then they took up stones that they might cast them at him, to destroy him; but Jesus miraculously concealed himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them unknown, and so passed on.

REFLECTIONS.

With what patience did our blessed Redeemer bear, and with what meekness of wisdom did he answer, the most virulent and opprobrious language! When he was rudely charged with being a Samaritan, and having a demon, he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; and being thus reviled, he reviled not again. And shall we too keenly resent the reflections which are thrown upon us? May but our conscience witness for us; and we need not fear all that are against us! Christ honoured his Father, and sought not his own glory. So may we be careful of the honour of God, and cheerfully commit to him the guardianship and care of our reputation! And we shall find there is one that seeketh, and judgeth in our favour.

It is a great and important promise which our Lord here makes, *If any one keep my word, he shall never see death.* Sense seems to plead

against it ; but he is *the resurrection and the life*, and hath assured us he will make it good. Let us therefore be *strong in faith, giving glory to God*. Though not only *Abraham and the prophets*, but Peter and Paul, and the other apostles *are dead*, yet this word shall be gloriously accomplished. Still *they live* to him, and shortly shall they be for ever recovered from the power of the grave ; so that death is to them comparatively as nothing. With them may our final portion be, and may we set light by the reproaches, clamours, and accusations of prejudiced, ignorant, and sinful men ?

Adored be that gracious Providence that determined our existence to begin in that happy day which prophets and patriarchs *desired to see*, and, in the distant view of which *Abraham rejoiced* ! Let it be also our joy ; for *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever* : nor could the heart of those holy men fully conceive those things which God had prepared for them that love him, and which he has now revealed unto us by his Spirit.

SECTION CVI.

The seventy disciples return with joy : Christ praises his heavenly Father for the wise though mysterious dispensation of the gospel. LUKE X. 17—24.

- 17 **A**ND *after these things*, the seventy disciples, whom Jesus had
 18 sent before him, returned to him again with joy, saying, Lord,
 19 even the demons are subject to us in thy name. And he said to
 20 them, I saw Satan falling like lightning from heaven. Behold I
 give you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all
 the might of the enemy ; and nothing shall by any means injure
 21 you. Nevertheless, rejoice not *so much* in this, that the spirits are
 subject to you ; but rather rejoice that your names are written in
 heaven.
- 21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said (*as on a former
 occasion**) I ascribe glory to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and
 earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent,
 and hast revealed them to infants : be it so, O Father ! since such
 22 is thy pleasure.—All things are delivered to me by my Father ;
 and no one knows who the Son is, except the Father ; nor who
 the Father is, except the Son, and he to whom the Son will re-
 23 veal him. And then, turning to his disciples, he said to them apart,
 24 Blessed are the eyes which see the things that you see ; for I say
 unto you, that many prophets and kings desired to have seen
 the things which you see, and did not see them ; and to have
 heard the thing which you hear, and did not hear them.

REFLECTIONS.

And are not our obligations in some measure proportionable to theirs, while these glorious sights are reflected to our eyes, from the

* MATT. xi. 25, 26. § 52.

mirror of his word, and these glad-tidings are echoed back to our ears? Have not *we* also reason to adore the peculiar favour of God to us, and to admire the sovereignty of his love, that he has been pleased to reveal *his Son* in us, and has given to such *babes*, as we must own ourselves to be, that spiritual knowledge of him, which he has suffered to remain *hidden* from the great, the learned, and the wise? *Even so, Father*, must we also say, *for so it seemed good in thy sight*: thou hast mercy on whom thou wilt have mercy, and often exaltest the riches of thy grace by the meanness and unworthiness of those on whom it is bestowed.

Have we reason to hope that our worthless names are written in *heaven*? Let us often think of that glorious society amongst whom we are enrolled as members, and rejoice in the thought of those privileges which result from such a relation to it: privileges, in comparison of which, a power to *heal diseases*, and *eject demons* with a word, would hardly deserve our joy. In a grateful sense of them, let us adore the grace which gave us a place in the *Lamb's book of life*, and be ever solicitous to behave in a manner worthy of so illustrious a hope.

We have great encouragement to expect that he, before whom *Satan fell like lightning from heaven*, will enable us finally to *trample on his power*. Let us not servilely fear that condemned criminal, already marked with the scars of the divine vengeance; but let us cheerfully hope that the triumph over him will be renewed by the preaching of the gospel. Quickened by that hope, let us more earnestly pray, that the ruin of his gloomy kingdom may be daily more and more apparent, especially among us; that our gracious Redeemer, who reckons the interest of souls his own, may have renewed reason of joy and praise on that account. Exert, O blessed *Jesus*, thine own almighty arm for that great purpose; and, as thou alone canst do it, *reveal thine heavenly Father* to those who, by neglecting thee, shew that they *know not him*!

SECTION CVII.

Christ answers the scribe who asked what he should do to inherit eternal life. The parable of the good Samaritan. LUKE x. 25—37.

- 25 **A**ND behold, as our Lord was addressing the seventy disciples, a certain lawyer, or scribe* rose up, to try him, and said,
 26 Master, what must I do that I may inherit eternal life? And he said to him, What is written in the law? how dost thou read?
 27 And he replying said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with
 "all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength,
 "and with all thine understanding, and thy neighbour as thyself."
 28 And he said to him, Thou hast answered right: do this, and thou

* Whose profession was to study and teach the law of Moses.

† This passage (*Deut. vi. 5. Lev. xix. 18.*) was daily read in their synagogues, as it is still.

29 shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And
 30 who is my neighbour? And Jesus replying said, A certain man
 went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers,
 who having both stripped and wounded him, went off leaving him
 31 half dead. And it happened that a certain priest went down that
 32 way, and seeing him *lie*, he crossed the road and went on. And
 in like manner a Levite, when he was at the place, came and look-
 33 ed on, and crossed and passed by. But a certain Samaritan, as he
 was travelling, came where he was, and seeing him *in this sad*
condition, was moved with compassion *towards him, though a Jew* ;
 34 and going to him, he bound up his wounds, when he had poured
 in oil and wine, and setting him on his own beast, he brought him
 35 to an inn, and took care of him *that night*. And the next morn-
 ing, as he departed, he took out two *denarii* or *Roman* pence, and
 gave them to the landlord, and said to him, Take care of him,
 and whatsoever more thou shalt spend I will repay thee as I come
 36 back. Now which of these three (*said our Lord*) dost thou think
 was the neighbour of this man that fell among the robbers? And
 37 he said, He that had mercy upon him. Then said Jesus to him,
 Go and do thou likewise.

REFLECTIONS.

Of how great importance is it that we should every one of us be
 in good earnest making this inquiry which the scribe addressed to
 our Lord, *What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life* ! What ought
 we not willingly to do, and to bear, that we may secure so great a fel-
 icity? Still will our Lord answer us from his word, that we must
keep the commandments of God, while we are looking to *him as the end*,
of the law for righteousness. Happy are they that faithfully do it,
 that through the grace manifested in the gospel *they may have a right*
to eat of the tree of life ! May this abstract and summary of the com-
 mandments be written, as it were in golden characters, on the table
 of each of our hearts ! May we love the Lord our God with all the
 united powers and faculties of our souls, and our neighbour as sin-
 cerely and fervently as ourselves ! And may we learn, from this beau-
 tiful parable of the good Samaritan, to exercise our charity to our
 fellow-creatures in the most amiable manner !

The Jewish priest and Levite had, no doubt, the ingenuity to find
 out some excuse or other for *passing over to the other side* ; and might,
 perhaps, formally thank God for their own deliverance, while they
 left their brother to bleed to death for want of their assistance. Is it
 not an emblem of many living characters, perhaps of some whose
sacred office lays them under the strongest obligations to distinguished
 benevolence and generosity? But the good Samaritan acted the part
 of a brother to this expiring Jew. *O seed of Israel, O house of Levi*
and of Aaron ! will not the day come when the humane virtues of
 heathens shall *rise up in judgment* against thee !

Let us reflect with shame, what are the differences between one
 Christian and another when compared with those between a Samaritan
 and a Jew ! Yet here the benevolence of a good heart overcame

even these ; and, on the view of a wounded dying man, forgot that he was by nation an enemy. Whose heart does not *burn within him*, whose eyes do not overflow with tears of delight, while he reads such a story ? Let us *go and do likewise*, regarding every man as our *neighbour* who needs our assistance. Let us exclude every malignant sentiment of *bigotry*, and *party zeal* which would contract our hearts into an inseparability for all the human race, but a little select number, whose sentiments and practices are so much our own, that our love to them is but *self-love* reflected. With an honest openness of mind let us always remember the relation between man and man, and feel and cultivate that happy instinct by which God, who has formed our hearts in many instances alike, has in the original constitution of our nature strongly and graciously bound them to each other.

SECTION CVIII.

Christ in his visit at Bethany, commends the diligence with which Mary attends his preaching, while Martha was too anxious about the entertainment. LUKE x. 38, &c.

- 38 **N**OW it came to pass, as they were on their journey, that he entered into a certain village, called *Bethany**, and a certain woman whose name was Martha received him into her house.
39 And she had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the feet of
40 Jesus, and heard his discourse. But Martha was *exceedingly* hurried† about much serving ; and coming in she said, Lord, dost thou not mind that my sister has left me to serve alone ? Speak to her therefore that she may lend her helping hand with mine.
41 And Jesus in reply said to her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious
42 and disturbed about many things : But there is one thing necessary ; and Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

REFLECTIONS.

So steadily and zealously did our blessed Lord pursue his work, with such unwearied diligence and constant affection ! No sooner is he entered into the house of his pious friend, but he sets himself to preach the word of salvation, and is the same in the parlour which he had been in the temple. O Mary, how delightful was thy situation ! Who would not rather have sat with thee *at the feet of Jesus* to hear *his wisdom*, than have filled the throne of the greatest prince upon earth ! *Blessed* were *thine eyes* in what they saw, *thine ears* in what they heard, and *thine heart* in what it received and embraced, and treasured up as *food* which would *endure to everlasting life* !

How unhappily was her good sister deprived of the entertainment of these golden moments, while *hurried* about meats and drinks, and tables with their furniture, till she lost, not only her opportunity, but

* See John xi. 1. § 139.

† The word properly signifies, to be drawn different ways at the same time.

her temper too ; as it is indeed hard to preserve it, without a resolute guard, amidst the crowd and clamour of domestic cares. Happy that mistress of a numerous family, who can manage its concerns with the meekness and composure of wisdom, and adjust its affairs in such a manner as that it may not exclude the pleasures of devotion, and cut her off from the means of religious improvement ! Happy the man who, in a pressing variety of secular business, is not so cumbered and careful as to forget that *one thing* which is absolutely needful ; but resolutely chooses *this better part* and retains it as the only secure and everlasting treasure ! Oh that this comprehensive and important sentence were ever before our eyes ! Oh that it were inscribed deep upon our hearts ! *One thing is needful.* And what is this *one thing* but the care of the soul ? what, but an humble attention to the voice and the gospel of Christ ? Yet, as if this were of all things the most unnecessary, for what poor trifling care is it not commonly forgot ? yea, to what worthless vanity is it not daily sacrificed ?

Let the ministers of Christ, let the friends of souls in every station, exert themselves, that all about them may be awakened duly to regard this great interest ; accounting it *their meat and their drink* to promote it. Let them be always solicitous that neither they nor others may neglect it for the hurries of too busy a life, or even for the services of an over-officious friendship.

SECTION CIX.

Christ being entreated by his disciples to teach them to pray, repeats with some additions, the instructions and encouragements which he had formerly given. LUKE xi. 1—13.

- 1 **A**ND as he was praying in a certain place, when he had ended, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray, as
- 2 John also taught his disciples. And he said to them, When you pray say, " Our Father, who art in heaven, may thy name be
- 3 sanctified. May thy kingdom come : may thy will be done,
- 4 " as in heaven so likewise upon earth. Give us day by day our
- 5 " daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for even we forgive eve-
- 6 " ry one that is indebted to us. And bring us not into tempta-
- 7 " tion ; but rescue us from the evil one."—And to excite them to a believing importunity in prayer, he said to them*, Who of you shall have a friend and shall go to him at midnight and say to him,
- 8 Friend, I beg of you to lend me three loaves ; for a friend of mine
- 9 benighted on his journey, is come to my house, and I have nothing
- 10 to set before him† : and he from within shall at first answer and

* Probably some further conversation might pass to introduce the following illustration, which otherwise appears abrupt. It may be proper to observe, that our Lord here as in many other cases, adapts his illustrations to persons of the lower ranks in life. Ed.

† The words do not make a complete grammatical sentence, but such incidental inaccuracies are to be found in the most approved authors.

- say, Do not disturb me at so late an hour, for the door is now shut and fastened, and my children are with me in bed : I cannot
 8 rise to give thee. *If he still go on to press the request, I tell you,*
 though he would not rise to give him the loaves, because he was
 his friend, yet on account of his importunity, he will get up and
 give him as many as he wants. *Much more will God, who is in-*
initely good, though he may not answer you immediately, at length
give you what you need, if you continue importunate in your pray-
 9 *ers :* And therefore I say to you, Ask and it shall be given you ;
 seek and you shall find ; knock at the door of mercy and it shall
 10 be opened to you. *This has been confirmed by happy experience :*
 for every one that asks, receives : and he that seeketh, findeth ;
 and to him that knocks it shall be opened.
 11 And consider what father is there among you, who, if a son
 shall ask for bread, will give him a stone ? or if he ask for a
 12 fish, instead of a fish will give him a serpent ? or if he ask for
 13 an egg, will give him a scorpion ? If you then, who are evil,
 know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more
 shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that
 earnestly ask him ?

REFLECTIONS.

Well does this petition become every disciple of Christ, *Lord, teach us to pray !* Thou hast taught us by thine example, and by the precepts of thy word ; teach us also by thine Holy Spirit ! Excellent is this *form* of sound and divine words, which our great Master here recommends. God forbid, that any of his followers should censure their brethren, who think it still proper to use it, not only as a *directory*, but as a *form* too, though perhaps with some little variation from the original sense of some clauses of it*. Let us attentively study it, that, concise and expressive as it is, our thoughts may go along with its several petitions.

Let us learn to reverence and love God, and to consider ourselves as brethren in his family. Let the glory of his name, and the prosperity of *his kingdom*, be much dearer to us than any separate interest of our own. Let it be our cordial desire that *his will* may be universally obeyed, and with the most entire consent of soul acquiesced in, by all his creatures, both in *heaven* and on *earth*. Let our appetites and passions be so moderated, that *having* even the plainest food and raiment we may be therewith content : and, on the other hand, how plentiful soever our circumstances may be, let us remember, that *day by day* we depend on God for our *daily bread*. Nor do we need even the most necessary supplies of life more than we need *daily pardon* ; to which therefore we should be putting in

* Dr. Guyse has excellently shewn that *this prayer* in its original sense was peculiarly suited to the dispensation then present, as introductory to the *Messiah's kingdom*. But there is not a clause in it which will not bear a more extensive sense, and express what ought to be the daily breathings of our heart before God. It is astonishing that any should condemn their brethren for using it.

our constant claim, heartily *forgiving all our brethren*, as we desire to be *forgiven by God*. Conscious of our own weakness, let us as far as we can, endeavour to avoid circumstances of *temptation*; and when necessarily led into them, let us be looking up to heaven for support; labouring above all things to preserve our integrity, and to maintain a *conscience void of offence*.

Depending on the certainty of these gracious promises; and encouraged by the experience of so many thousands, who have on *asking received*, and on *seeking found*, let us renew our importunate addresses to the throne of divine grace: and, remembering the compassion of our heavenly Father, let us be emboldened, in the *full assurance of faith*, to ask every necessary blessing, especially the communication of that enlightening and sanctifying *Spirit*, without which our corrupt hearts will find out a ready way to abuse the choicest of his providential favours to the dishonour of his holy name, and the deeper wounding of our own miserable souls.

SECTION CX.

Our Lord dining at the house of a Pharisee, admonishes him and his brethren of their guilt and danger. LUKE xi. 37, &c.*

- 37 **N**OW while he was speaking, a certain Pharisee invited him to dine with him, and he went in and sat down to meat.
- 38 And when the Pharisee saw that he did not first wash before dinner, he wondered *at it*. But the Lord said to him, Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, while your inward part is full of rapine and wickedness. O thoughtless creatures, Did not he that made the outside, make also that which is
- 41 within? But give alms in proportion to your substance, and behold all things are pure to you. But wo unto you Pharisees! for you pay the tithe of mint, and rue, and every *other herb*, but pass by judgment and the love of God. These you ought to have
- 43 done, and not to neglect the other. Wo unto you Pharisees! for you love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the markets. Wo unto you, O Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like concealed graves, which men walk over, and are not aware of *them*.
- 45 And one of the doctors of the law answered and said unto him, Master, in saying these things, thou reproachest us too. But he said, Wo unto you also, ye interpreters of the law! for you load men with insupportable burdens, and you yourselves will not touch
- 47 the burdens with one of your fingers. Wo unto you *all*, for you build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers slew them.
- 48 Truly you bear witness to and approve the works of your fathers; for they indeed slew them, and you build their sepulchres, *one would imagine not so much in honour of them as of their persecutors*.

* The verses 14—36, here omitted, are inserted § 61—64 as parallel to Matt. xii. 22, &c.

49 Therefore also the wisdom of God* hath said, I will send them
 other prophets and apostles, and *some* of them they will kill, and
 50 persecute *the rest*; that the blood of all the prophets which has
 been shed from the foundation of the world, may *seem* to be requir-
 51 ed of this generation; from the blood of Abel to the blood of
 Zechariah, who was slain between the altar and the temple. (2
Chron. xxiv. 20.) Yea I tell you *again*, It shall be required of
 52 this generation. Wo unto you interpreters of the law! for you
 have taken away the key of knowledge: you have not entered in *to*
the kingdom yourselves, and those that would have entered in you
 53 have hindered. While he spake these things to them, the Scribes
 and Pharisees began fiercely to fasten upon him, and rudely to
 54 urge him to speak of many things, *that were exceptionable*; laying
 snares for him, and attempting to start† some *unguarded* word
 from his mouth, that they might accuse him *to the magistrate*.

REFLECTIONS.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; and such were the reproofs of Christ on this occasion. How well had all the entertainments of the *Pharisee's* table been repaid, had he and his brethren heard them with candour, humility, and obedience! These men despised them to their ruin; let us often review them for our instruction, that none of these dreadful *woes* may come upon us. This discourse of our Lord is a most just and severe rebuke to every hypocritical professor, who is scrupulous and exact in matters of ceremony, while he neglects morality; and is studious to shine in the sight of men, while he forgets the all penetrating eye of God. It exposes the ostentation of those who pride themselves in empty titles of honour, and eagerly affect precedence and superiority. And it evidently chastises those who press on others the duties they neglect themselves, and so are most righteously *judged out of their own mouth*.

How melancholy is it to observe, in instances like these, the hypocrisy and deceitfulness of the human heart, and its desperate and unfathomable wickedness! and to see how men impose upon themselves with empty appearances, like these *Pharisees*; who *built the sepulchres of the former prophets*, while they were *persecuting* those of their own day; and, in contempt of all that was said by the messengers of God were *filling up the measure of their iniquities*, till the cloud which had been so long gathering burst on their heads, and poured forth a storm of aggravated wrath and ruin! May that God, who has an immediate access to the hearts of men, deliver all christian countries, and especially all protestant churches, from such teachers as are here described; who *take away* and *secrete the key of knowledge* instead of using it, and obstruct, rather than promote, men's entrance into the kingdom of heaven! How loud will *the blood* of the souls they have

* That is, God in his wisdom.

† The word *ingenerat* has a most beautiful propriety, signifying the eagerness with which sportsmen beat about for game to start it from its cover.

betrayed cry against them in the awful day of accounts! and how little will the *wages of unrighteousness*, and the rewards of worldly policy, be able to warn them against destruction, or to support them under it!

SECTION CXI.

Christ cautions his disciples against hypocrisy, and animates them against the fear of men by the promise of extraordinary assistance. LUKE xii. 1—12.

- 1 **I**N the mean time, while Christ was at the Pharisee's house, many thousands* of people were gathered together, so that they trampled on each other; and he began to say to his disciples, Above all things take heed to yourselves of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing concealed which shall not be unveiled, nor hid which shall not be made known. So that whatever you have spoken in darkness shall be published in the light; and what you have whispered in closets shall be proclaimed as from the house-tops.
- 4 And I say unto you, my friends, Fear not those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more which they can do. But I will point out to you whom you shall fear; fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell. I say unto you, Fear him. His providence extends to the meanest of his creatures. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings†? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: you are more valuable than many sparrows. But whatever you may suffer in my cause you will not be losers in the end, for I say unto you, If any one shall acknowledge me before men, the Son of man shall also acknowledge him before the angels of God. But as for him that renounces me before men, him will I also renounce before the angels of God.
- 10 And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it may be forgiven him on repentance; but as for him that blasphemeth the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him.
- 11 But when they shall bring you before the synagogues and magistrates, and the supreme powers, be not anxious how to behave, or what apology you shall make, or what you shall say; for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say to vindicate the honour of my gospel, and to confound your enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us, from this discourse which we have been reading, learn the folly of hypocrisy, as well as the wickedness of it. A lying tongue is but for a moment; and the great approaching judgment-day will shew

* Greek, *i* Myriads. A myriad is ten thousand.

† A Roman coin called *as*, the tenth part of the penny, equal to about three of our farthings.

all in their true colours. May we live as those who are then to be *made manifest* ! May the *leaven* of deceit, by divine grace, be entirely purged out of our hearts ; and all our conduct be so fair and equal, that it may appear more honourable and lovely, in proportion to the accuracy with which it is examined ; as the whitest garments are recommended by being seen in the strongest light !—If we would preserve such an integrity of soul, let us endeavour to get above the servile *fear of man* ; *of man, that shall die, and of the son of man, that shall be made as grass* ; as if the *oppressor* had us in his power, and were ready to destroy : and where is the *fury of the oppressor* ? With what infinite ease can God restrain it ; and when it is let loose in all its violence, how little can it do to hurt his faithful servants ! Let this mean passion be over-awed by the *fear of that God* who has our eternal all in his hands ; whose vengeance, or favour, will reach far beyond the grave, and determine our final misery or felicity, as we are the objects of the one or the other.

While we are in the world let us labour after a firm faith in the universality of divine Providence ; from which the least of his creatures are not exempted, nor are they forgotten by it. Let us endeavour to enjoy the pleasure and comfort of such a thought ; assuring ourselves that he who regards the life of birds and of insects will not neglect the care and preservation of his children. In a steady persuasion of this, let us determine courageously to confess and maintain his gospel in the extremest danger ; knowing that thus only we shall secure the honour of being *owned by Christ* amidst all the glories of his final appearance. And, in a word, to animate us to this holy courage, and to assist us in every other duty, let us earnestly pray for the *Holy Spirit* ; by whose influence the apostles were instructed and supported in the discharge of their difficult and various offices ; whose grace therefore must be abundantly *sufficient for us*, to cause us to *abound in every good word and work*.

SECTION CXII.

Christ declines interposing in a dispute between two brethren : advances a caution against covetousness, and enforces it by the parable of the rich fool. LUKE xii. 13—21.

13 **A**ND one of the crowd *that was about Jesus*, said to him, Mas-
 14 ter, speak to my brother that he would divide the inher-
 15 itance with me. But he replied, Man, who constituted me a
 16 judge or a divider over you ? And he said to them *that were pre-*
sent, See to it that you be upon your guard against covetousness ;
 for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his posses-
 sions. And to enforce this remark, he spake a parable to them and
 said,

There was a certain rich man, whose ground bore * so plenti-
 fully, *that he had not room for the produce*. And he reasoned with

* "Fruit" is here unnecessarily supplied.

himself saying, What shall I do? for I have not room to store up
 18 my crop. And *after some pause* he said, I will do this: I will pull
 down my barns and build larger; and then I will gather in all my
 19 increase. And I will say to my soul, Thou hast now, *r my soul*,
 abundance of goods laid up for many years: repose thyself; eat,
 20 drink, and be merry. But God said to him, Thou fool, this night
 thy soul shall be demanded of thee: *and then who shall possess*
 21 what thou hast provided? So is he that heaps up treasure to him-
 self, and is not rich with respect to God, *in acts of charity and pi-*
ety.

REFLECTIONS.

Most prudently did our Lord decline the invidious office of an arbitrator in civil affairs; and wisdom will require his ministers generally to avoid it likewise. It is more suitable to our office, like our blessed Master, to endeavour to draw off and disengage the minds of men from *covetousness*, and to pluck up the root of those eager *contentions* which so often divide even the nearest relations, and inspire them with mutual aversions, more invincible *than the bars of a castle.*

And that a covetous desire of the enjoyments of the world may not create contentions, and engage us in pursuits that will be fatal to our souls, let us seriously consider the true value of things, and reflect how little riches can do to make us happy if we obtain them; and how very uncertain that life is on the continuance of which our possession of them does so evidently depend. But, alas, how many are there, who are now as deeply engaged in their worldly schemes as this *rich fool* in the parable, to whom God will, in a few weeks, or days, if not *this very night*, say, by the awful voice of his irresistible providence, *Thy soul is required of thee!* And then what will all these treasures do to purchase life, or to allay the agonies of death? So far will they be found from being capable of this, that they will rather serve to increase and embitter the surprise and anguish of those agonies. Let it then be our labour and care that we may be *rich towards God*; rich in works of piety and charity. So shall we safely consign over our treasure to the bank of heaven, and shall be enriched by it when we leave the world as naked as we entered upon it, and lose all but what has been so wisely and happily spent.

SECTION CXIII.

Christ repeats his former cautions and arguments against an anxious and covetous temper. LUKE xii. 22—34.

22 **A**ND he said to his disciples, For this cause, *the great uncertainty of riches*, I say unto you, be not anxious about your life, what you shall eat; nor ~~for~~ the body, what you shall put on.
 23 The life *itself* is more *important* than meat, and the body than
 24 raiment. Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap, and have neither store-house nor barn; yet God feedeth them: how
 25 much more are you better than the birds? And which of you, by

26 taking thought, can add a single cubit to his age, or *stature* ? If
 then you cannot do the least matter, why are you anxious about
 27 the rest ? Consider the lilies, how they grow ; they neither labour
 nor spin ; yet I say unto you, Even Solomon in all his magnifi-
 28 cence was not arrayed as one of these. And if God so clothe the
 grass of the field which is *flourishing* to day, and to-morrow is
 thrown into the furnace, how much more *will he* clothe you, O
 29 ye of little faith ! Do not you *then solicitously* seek what ye shall
 eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor be agitated with restless thoughts.
 30 For the nations of the world, *the heathen*, seek after all these
 things ; but your *heavenly Father* who knows that you have need
 31 of these things, *will provide them for you in a proper degree*. But
 seek ye rather the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be
 32 added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's *gracious*
 33 pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have, *when*
Providence shall call you to it, and distribute it in charity ; and so
 you may provide for yourselves purses which do not grow old ; a
 never-failing treasure in heaven ; where no thief approaches, nor
 34 doth the moth spoil *the robes of glory* ; because where your treas-
 ure is, there will your heart be also.

REFLECTIONS.

Are we not all conscious to ourselves that on such topics as these we need *line upon line, and precept upon precept*, as being too deficient in our regard, though God *speak once, yea twice* ? We see our heavenly Father *crowning the earth with his goodness* : to this day does he *clothe the grass and the flowers* with the same profusion of ornament ; to this day does he *feed the young ravens when they cry*, nor is the meanest species of insects perished. Still does he *know our necessities* ; and still he addresses us in the same gracious language, and avows the same endearing paternal relation. The experience of his power, goodness, and fidelity, is increasing with every succeeding generation, with every revolving day. The life that he has given is supported by his care ; and the same hand that formed the body nourishes and clothes it. Let us then *cast all our care on him*, as being persuaded that *he careth for us* ; Feeble as his *little flock* is, *it is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom* ; and we are unworthy our share in so glorious a hope, if we cannot trust him for inferior blessings, and refer it to him to judge in what manner our present wants are to be supplied.

Let the *heathens* abandon themselves to these low anxieties ; but as for us, let us thank God, and take courage, opening our hearts wide to every sentiment of faith in God, and *charity* to men ; and, while we have this inexhaustible bank to draw upon, let us be *rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate*, so *laying up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life* ; the very hope and expectation of which, if our heart be set upon it, will give us incomparably sweeter delight than the securest possessions of this empty world, and the most ample magazines of its richest stores.

SECTION CXIV.

Christ exhorts his disciples to watchfulness and fidelity, in expectation of his coming, and of the final account. LUKE xii. 35—48.

- 35 **L**ET your loins be girded up* and your lamps be burning. And
 36 be you like men who wait for their Lord's return from a
 marriage-feast, that when he comes and knocks at the door they
 37 may immediately open it to him. Happy are those servants whom,
 when *their* Lord comes, he shall find watching for him : verily I
 say unto you that he will gird himself, and cause them to sit down
 38 to supper, and come forth and wait upon them. And whether he
 shall come *early* in the second watch, or come *late* in the third
 watch of the night†, and find them thus employed, happy are those
 servants.—*The day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night.*
 39 And you know this, that if the keeper of the house ‡ had been
 aware at what hour the thief would have come, he would have
 watched, and would not have permitted his house to be broke
 40 open. Be you therefore also ready ; for at such a season as you
 think not, the Son of man cometh.
- 41 Peter then said unto him, Lord dost thou speak this parable to
 42 us, or also unto all ? And the Lord said, (*to lead them to apply it*
to themselves) Who is that faithful and prudent steward, whom
 his Lord shall set over the servants of his family, to deal out the
 stated allowance of food in its proper season ? *As the guilt of such*
an one will be greater than that of a common servant if he prove
 43 *negligent ; peculiarly happy is that servant in so eminent a station,*
 44 *whom his Lord, at his arrival, shall find thus employed. Truly*
 I say to you, that he will appoint him to take the care of all that
 45 he hath.—But, if that servant *should* say in his heart, My Lord
 delays his coming, and shall begin to beat the men and maid-ser-
 46 vants, and to eat and drink and to be drunken r, the Lord of that
 servant will come in a day when he does not expect him, and in
 an hour which he is not aware of, and will scourge him so as to cut
 47 him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the infidels. And
 that servant who knew his Lord's will, *by a particular declaration*
of it, and did not keep himself ready, nor do according to his
 48 *will, shall be beaten with many stripes||. But he who did not*
 know, and yet committed things which deserved stripes, shall be
 beaten with fewer strokes. For much shall be required from every
 one to whom much is given ; and where much is deposited,
 the more will be demanded. *But wilful ignorance will not excuse any.*

* As the Easterns wore long garments, it was necessary in business which required agility, to gird them up close.

† This included all the time from nine o'clock to three.

‡ "House-keeper" is commonly applied to an upper female servant,

|| Scourging was a usual punishment for negligent servants.

REFLECTIONS.

May our souls be awakened by these awful truths ! and may we be engaged to *gird up the loins of our mind, to be sober, and watch to the end* ! Great are our encouragements to diligence, on the one hand ; and, on the other, dreadful will be the punishment of our neglect. The time of our Lord's appearance is uncertain ; let us therefore *always be ready* ; solicitous that when he comes he may *find us so doing*, as he has required ; *living not to ourselves, but to him*, and employing ourselves about that particular thing, whatsoever it may be, which, all circumstances considered, we are verily persuaded may most promote the great ends of life, and the important purposes of his glory.—How glorious are the rewards promised to such ! How justly may they awaken our emulation ! He will prefer them to stations of more honourable and important service. He will *set them down at his table*; and *minister* (as it were) *himself* to their delight, bringing forth the choicest dainties of heaven, and spreading before them an eternal banquet. Lord, may we, through thy grace, be found worthy to *taste of that supper* ! May the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne feed us, and guide us to fountains of living water !

On the other hand, let us seriously consider the punishments to be inflicted on the *unfaithful servant*. Let ministers, if such there are, who abandon themselves to a life of idleness and luxury ; who stain their sacred character by intemperance ; who proudly censure their brethren, and either call, or wish, for the secular arm to *smite their fellow-servants*, perhaps more faithful than themselves ; let such hear and tremble. Their Lord may come in a very unexpected hour ; (as indeed, when do such expect him ?) and what are the stripes they have given others, when compared with those which they shall themselves receive ? stripes which shall *cut them asunder*, and pierce deep into their very souls ! How much more tolerable will it be, even for the worst of *Gentile sinners*, than for such !

Let all who are in any measure distinguished by the gifts of the divine bounty to them, or by their stations, whether in civil or sacred offices, attentively dwell on this great truth, so solemnly repeated again and again ; let them consider it with a view to their own account : *To whomsoever much is given, of him will much be required*. May divine grace so impress it on their hearts, that they may be distinguished by present fidelity, and future rewards, in proportion to the difference which Providence has already made in their favour ! And may they never have reason to reflect with confusion and anguish on what is now their honour and their joy !

SECTION CXV.

Christ observes the evils occasioned by his coming, and declares his desire to complete his work notwithstanding, and warns the Jews of the great danger of neglecting the short time of their trial. LUKE xii. 49, &c.

- 49 **O**UR Lord further added, I am come to send fire on the earth, such are the violent contentions that my gospel will occasion. And yet what do I wish? Oh that it were already kindled! since the blessings so far counterbalance the evils of my religion.
- 50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with *being shortly to be bathed*
- 51 *in blood*: yet how am I straitened* till it be accomplished! Do you suppose that I am come to give peace on the earth? Nay, but
- 52 I say unto you, rather division. For such contentious heats will attend the publication of the gospel, that ere long five in one family
- 53 shall be divided; three against two, and two against three: the father, *for instance*, shall differ with the son, and the son with the father: the mother with the daughter, and the daughter with the mother: the mother-in-law with her son's wife, and the daughter-in-law with her husband's mother†.
- 54 And he said also to the people, *who overlooked so many proofs of the Messiah's appearance among them*, When you see a cloud arising out of the West, you presently say, A heavy shower is coming; and it is so. And when you find the South wind blowing, you say,
- 55 There will be sultry heat; and so it comes to pass. Ye hypocrites, you know how to distinguish the face of the earth and of
- 56 the heavens, but how is it that you do not discern this time? Yea why is it you do not even of yourselves judge what is right?
- 57 When you go to the magistrate with your adversary, use your endeavour to make up the affair with him, *while you are on the way*, lest he force thee before the judge, and the judge, *having found thee to be accountable*, deliver thee to the serjeant, and the serjeant throw
- 58 thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not come out from thence till thou hast paid the very last mite of the debt. And thus, if you are regardless of the proposals of God's mercy, while the day of life and grace is continued, nothing is to be expected from the tribunal of his justice, but a sentence which will end in everlasting punishment.

REFLECTIONS.

To what a lamentable degree is human nature corrupted, that so noble a remedy as the gospel, so well adapted to the cure of a malevolent and contentious disposition, should in so many instances only irritate the disease! and that a scheme so full of love and goodness, and so well suited to promote peace and harmony in those who cor-

* The word *συνεχόμενος* seems to import an ardour of mind with which a person is soborne on towards an object that the impediments which lie in his way are uneasy to him. See 2 Cor. v. 14.

† See on Matt. x. 34, 35. § 76.

dially embrace it, should be opposed with all the violence of persecution, and be the means of introducing strife and division ! How monstrous is it, that any should *hate their neighbours*, yea, and their nearest *relatives*, for that disinterested piety, and regard to conscience, which might recommend strangers to their esteem and affection !— Yet let not those who meet with such injurious treatment be discouraged ; knowing they have a Father and a Saviour in heaven, whose love is ten thousand times more than all : nor let others be offended, as if Christianity had been the occasion of more evil than good ; for such is the nature of eternity, that the salvation of one immortal soul will be more than equivalent for the greatest and most lasting temporal evils which the greatest number of persons can suffer for conscience sake.

Let this awaken our zeal to save souls, however great and terrible the sufferings are to which it may expose us, in proportion to the rage with which the enemy is endeavouring their destruction. May we be animated in it by the example of the blessed Jesus, who, with a view to this, even *longed for those sufferings* which innocent nature could not but regard as the object of strong aversion ! May we at all times be so wise as to discern the evidences, and to comply with the purposes of the gospel, else our knowledge in natural things, should it extend not only to the most common but the most curious appearances on the *face of the earth or the heavens*, will turn to no other account but to shame and condemn us !

If we have any reason to fear that, through obstinate impenitence, the blessed God is still an *adversary* to us, let us make it our first and greatest care that, by an humble submission of soul to him in the methods of his gospel-grace, that strict scrutiny of his justice may be prevented, and that sentence of his wrath averted, which would otherwise plunge us into endless ruin and misery ; for when could we pretend to have *paid the last farthing* of the debt of *ten thousand talents*, which we have been daily contracting, and which is charged to our account in the *book of his remembrance* !

SECTION CXVI.

Christ, on the mention of some calamities which had befallen others, warns his hearers of their danger if they did not repent, and illustrates it by the parable of the barren fig-tree. LUKE xiii. 1—9.

- 1 **N**OW some who were present at that time *with Jesus*, told him of those *unhappy Galileans**, whose blood Pilate had
- 2 mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus in reply, said to them, Do you think that these Galileans were sinners above all the Ga-
- 3 lileans, that they suffered such things ? I tell you, No : but, except you repent, you shall all perish thus ; *vengeance will over-*

* The followers of *Judas Gaulonites*. He was at the head of a sect who asserted God to be their only sovereign, and accounted it unlawful to pay tribute to Cæsar. Probably this *Judas* is the person referred to *Acts* v. 37. This story of the Galileans might be now mentioned to Christ with a design of leading him into a snare.

- 4 *take you, and your whole nation. Or (to instance in another unhappy case) that of those eighteen men on whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them; do you think they were greater offenders*
 5 *than all the other inhabitants of Jerusalem? I tell you, No; but except you repent, you shall all perish thus, under the ruins of that holy city in which you trust.*
 6 *And to awaken them to such repentance, he spake this parable:*
 7 *A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came searching for fruit upon it, but he found none. And he said to the keeper of the vineyard, Behold these three years I have come to look for fruit upon this fig-tree, and still I find none; cut*
 8 *it down, why does it cumber the ground? But he said to him in reply, Sir, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and*
 9 *lay dung to it: Perhaps it may bear fruit; but if not, after this thou shalt cut it down.*

REFLECITONS.

Which of us may not learn a lesson for himself from this instructive parable of the *fig-tree*? Have we not long been planted in God's vineyard, and favoured with the cultivation of his ordinances, yea, with the dews of his grace too; and yet how little fruit have we borne in proportion to those advantages? How long has he come seeking it in vain, while we have frustrated the most reasonable expectations, perhaps not only for *three*, but several of us for more than *thirty years*? Wonderful is it that the dreadful sentence has not long since gone forth against us, *Cut them down, why cumber they the ground?* We owe it to the intercession of our blessed Redeemer, the great *keeper* of the garden of God, that this has not long since been our case. *Let us not be high-minded, but fear!* Let barren sinners reflect that this may be the last year, perhaps indeed the last month, or last day of their trial; for even now also is *the axe laid to the root of the tree!* And let them remember, that though *there be hope of a tree, when it is cut down, that it may sprout again*, yet, when the doom is executed on them, *their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will go up like dust*; and every tree which brings not forth good fruit will be hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Let such therefore meditate *terror* when the *judgments of God are abroad in the earth*; and, when others are overwhelmed in ruin, let them not harshly censure the sufferers, as if they were *greater sinners than any others*; but let them apply that salutary, though awful, admonition to their own souls, repeating it again and again, till they are pricked to the heart by it, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Terrible indeed was the case of those whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, and of those who were dashed to pieces in a moment by the fall of *Siloam's tower*: but infinitely more dreadful will be the condition of them that *fall into the hands of the living God*, especially of those deceivers who, having surrounded his altars with the hypocritical forms of devotion, shall themselves be made the victims of his justice, and be crushed by the resistless weight of his almighty vengeance.

SECTION CXVII.

Christ cures a crooked woman in the synagogue on the sabbath-day; and repeats the parables of the grain of mustard-seed, and of the leaven.
 LUKE xiii. 10—22.

10 **A**ND as he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath-day, Behold there was a woman, who had a spirit of weakness* eighteen years, and was bowed together, so that she
 11 was utterly unable to raise herself upright. And Jesus seeing her, called her to him, and said to her, Woman, thou art loosed from
 12 thy weakness. And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately
 13 she was made straight; and she glorified God. But a ruler of the synagogue, moved with indignation, because Jesus had healed
 14 on the sabbath-day, answered and said unto the people, There are six days on which *common* work must be done; on these
 15 therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day. Then the Lord answered him and said, Thou hypocrite, Does not every
 16 one of you loose his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead him away to drink on the sabbath-day? Now was it not fit that this woman,
 17 who is a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, lo these eighteen years, should be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day? And when he had said these things, all his opposers were
 18 ashamed, and all the multitude rejoiced, for all the glorious things that were done by him.

18 And he said, To what is the kingdom of God like, and what
 19 shall I compare it to? It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his garden; and it grew, and became such a great tree, that the birds of the air lodged in its branches. *So shall my kingdom, which in its beginning seems contemptible, diffuse itself in time over the whole world.* And again he said, To what
 20 shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and covered up in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. *So shall the gospel, by a secret influence, spread its efficacy through the hearts of men.* And he went through the cities and villages teaching, and travelling on toward Jerusalem.

REFLECTIONS.

Again do we see, in a very instructive instance, the power and goodness of Christ. It wrought on a poor despised creature; but our Lord considered her as a daughter of Abraham, and honoured, even in her, whatever traces of her father Abraham's faith and piety his penetrating eye might discern. Her zeal and willingness to attend on public worship brought her out, though she could not stand upright, and had probably in that respect a much better excuse for staying at home, than many could make who now often absent themselves from the much nobler services of the Christian sanctuary.

* The Jews apprehended that all remarkable disorders of body proceeded from the operation of some malignant demon.

She met with Christ in the synagouge, and returned with a cure. And oh, how many, as the effect of such a pious zeal, though they have not been *loosed from their infirmities*, have at least been greatly strengthened to bear them. Our Lord says that *Satan had bound her*. That malignant enemy to our bodies and souls rejoices in any opportunity of hurting either. But it is pleasing to think that his power is always under the controul of Christ; and therefore shall never be exercised on his people any further than their gracious Redeemer sees it consistent with their good, and will take care to render it subservient to it.

How gravely does this ruler of the synagogues instruct the people in a point of ceremony, while his heart was full of enmity to Christ, and hardened against every sentiment of human compassion! Justly was his hypocrisy confounded and exposed. We should with pleasure see this *Sun of Righteousness* thus victoriously breaking through those clouds which envy and malice had raised to obscure him, and diffusing his sacred light from one end of the heavens to the other. With pleasure should we view the accomplishment of these parables which represent the success of his gospel as so great; and we should daily pray, with increasing earnestness, that all the remaining nations and *kingdom of this world* may at length *become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ*; and sincere converts flock to him from every side, even *as doves to their windows*!

SECTION CXVIII.

Christ warns his hearers of the difficulty and importance of entering into the kingdom. He is not intimidated by the fear of Herod. His lamentation over Jerusalem. LUKE xiii. 23, &c.

- 23 **A**ND as Jesus was proceeding in his journey towards Jerusalem attended by several of his disciples, one of them said to him, Lord, are there *but few* that shall be saved? But he said to them,
- 24 *Instead of amusing yourselves with such curious enquiries*, exert your utmost strength to enter in at the straight gate: for I tell
- 25 you many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. As soon as ever the Master of the family shall have risen up, and shall have shut the door, and you shall begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us, and he shall reply
- 26 to you, I know you not whence you are, then you shall begin to say, We have eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast
- 27 taught in our streets: Nevertheless, he will *disown you and say*, I tell you, I know you not whence you are; depart from me, all ye
- 28 that practise iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves cast out.
- 29 Yea, they shall come from the east, and the west, and from the north,
- 30 and the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold there are *many who are now last in sight of religious advan-*

tages, that shall *then* be first in honour and happiness, and there are many who now appear first, that shall *then* be found last.

- 31 On that day some of the Pharisees came and said to him, Go forth, and depart from hence ; for Herod is determined to kill
 32 thee. But, *far from being alarmed*, he said to them, Go, and tell that fox (*that crafty, voracious prince*) Behold, I cast out demons, and perform cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall
 33 be perfected* ; *quickly I shall finish my course*. Nevertheless, I must go on to-day, and to-morrow, and the third day : *nor do I fear the effects of Herod's malice* ; for it cannot be supposed that
 34 a prophet should perish *any where* out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who slayest the prophets, and stonest those who are sent unto thee ! How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings ? Yet you
 35 would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate ; and I assuredly say unto you, that you shall see me no more, till the time come when you shall say, Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

And who would not welcome such a Saviour, when he appears on so kind a design ! who would not *bless him that cometh in the name of the Lord*, to gather our souls with the tenderest care, and to shelter us from wrath and ruin ! that Saviour whose bowels yearned over us, and whose heart poured forth its blood for us ! Too many reject him, and will not hearken to the kindest calls of his compassionate voice. Unhappy creatures ! the time will come when they too late will be convinced of their fatal error. Let each of us be solicitous for himself. Away with those vain curiosities which serve only to amuse and distract our thoughts. Let us call, and fix them down to the great concerns of our own salvation : and, if we would secure it, let us prepare to encounter difficulties, and *strive*, as for our lives, to break through all the opposition of our enemies, and resolutely *to enter in at the straight gate*. How many have sought it when the door has been barred ? and how soon may the great *Master of the house arise*, and shut it for ever against those who are yet trifling !

Let not hypocrites trust in vain words. *The workers of iniquity shall be disowned by Christ at last*, though they may have *eaten and drank in his presence*. But oh, who can express the disappointment, the rage, and despair, of those who fall from such towering hopes, and plunge, as from the very gates of heaven, into the lowest abyss of darkness and horror ! Their hearts will endeavour to harden themselves in vain ; their doleful cries shall be distinguished in that region of universal horror ! but they shall not penetrate the regions of the blessed, nor interrupt the delight with which even the dearest of their pious relatives shall *sit down in the kingdom of God*.

* Many suppose that our Lord is not to be understood as speaking exactly of three days, but of a little period of time. See *Hos. vi. 2*. [Perhaps by "perfected" he meant, that he should have finished his course in Herod's dominions. See § 119. v. 1.]

If we through grace have more substantial hopes, let us imitate the zeal and courage of our divine Leader ; and, whatever threatenings or dangers may oppose us, let us go on, day after day, till our work be done, and our souls at length *perfected* in glory. But let us carefully distinguish between those things in which our Lord meant himself as our pattern, and those which were peculiar to his office as a prophet sent from God. That extraordinary office justified him in using that severity of language, when speaking of wicked princes and corrupt teachers, to which we have no call ; and by which we should only bring scandal on religion, and ruin on ourselves, while we irritated, rather than convinced or reformed, those whom we undertook so indecently to rebuke.

SECTION CXIX.

Our Lord dining with a Pharisee, cures a man of a dropsy, cautions the guests against affecting precedence, and urges them to works of charity. LUKE XIV. 1—14.

- 1 **A**ND it came to pass that, as our Lord was finishing his journey through Herod's dominions, he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees, to eat bread (*that is to dine with him*)
- 2 on the sabbath-day ; and they were narrowly watching him. And behold there was a certain man before him, that had a dropsy.
- 3 And Jesus, answering to the secret reasonings of their minds, said to the doctors of the law, and other Pharisees, Is it lawful to heal
- 4 on the sabbath-day ? But they were silent ; and, taking him by
- 5 the hand, he healed him, and dismissed him. And as he saw they were secretly cavilling at it, he said in answer to them, Which of
- 6 you, if he have an ass or an ox that shall fall into a pit, will not immediately draw him out on the sabbath-day ? And they were not able to answer him again to these things.
- 7 And he spake a parable to those that were invited, when he observed how they chose the chief seats ; and said unto them, When thou art invited by any to a wedding-feast, do not sit down in the uppermost place, lest another more honourable than thou should
- 9 be invited by him ; and he that invited you both should come and say to thee, Give place to this person ; and thou shouldst then
- 10 begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when thou art invited, go and sit down in the lowest place ; that when he that invited thee comes, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher : then thou shalt have honour in the sight of them that sit at table
- 11 with thee. For every one who exalts himself shall be humbled ;
- 12 but he that humbles himself shall be exalted. Then said he also to him that invited him, When thou makest a dinner or supper, invite not thy rich friends, or thy brethren, or thy kindred, or neighbours, lest they also invite thee again, and a recompence be
- 13 made thee. But when thou wouldst make an entertainment, invite
- 14 the poor, the disabled, the lame, and the blind. And thou shalt be happy, in that they are not capable of making thee a requital ; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

REFLECTIONS.

How happy were they who had frequent opportunities of conversing with Christ, whose discourses were always so wise and so useful ! how well did he repay all the entertainments he received in the advantages which he gave for religious improvement ! In vain might his enemies watch for occasions against him. *In his tongue was the law of wisdom as well as of kindness.* And surely *the lips* of his ministers and disciples would *feed many* to their everlasting benefit, were this blessed model to be more carefully traced !

Let us particularly observe what he here says concerning a modest and humble deportment, which is indeed the surest way to be honoured and respected. And let us take great heed that that good breeding, which consists so much in the expressions of humility and a readiness to prefer others to ourselves, do not degenerate into a mere form, and prove, as it too often does, the cloak of arrogance and pride ; but that it have its foundation in a lowly opinion of ourselves, and an habitual disposition to submit even to our inferiors, when we may do it without breaking in upon the duties and decencies of life, and injuring those to whom it may be exercised, by an indulgence which they know not how to understand or improve.

Let us hearken to these exhortations to charity from the mouth of our charitable Saviour, who *gave himself for us.* And as *Christ pleased not himself*, let us not allow ourselves to squander away great quantities of money in what may gratify our own senses, or make a gaudy shew in the eyes of the vainer part of mankind ; but let us be willing to spare from the luxuries and superfluities of life, that we may bestow it on the poor and the distressed. And indeed, whatever our circumstances and possessions be, we must expect the stream of our bounty will soon be dried up, if it be not supplied from the fountain of a prudent frugality. This self-denial may now in some instances be painful ; but it will be amply *recompensed at the resurrection of the just.* May we then meet with many whom our liberality has fed and clothed, whom our knowledge and zeal have instructed, and whom our holy examples have edified and quickened ! Here will be a foundation laid for the endearments of an eternal friendship ; when that which has been formed upon a partnership in vice, or animal pleasure, shall be for ever forgotten, or be remembered with mutual horror.

SECTION CXX.

Our Lord foretells, in the parable of the great supper, the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles. LUKE XIV. 15—24.

15 **A**ND one of the guests at the *Pharisee's table* hearing these things, and willing to keep up so good a conversation, said to him, Happy is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God, and share the entertainments of the Messiah. Our Lord thought proper to remind him that many would in fact slight and reject them ;
16 to this purpose, he uttered a parable ; and he said to him, A cer-

17 tain man made a greater supper, and invited many. And he sent his servant at the hour of supper, to say to those that were invited, Come, for all things are now ready. And they all began with one consent to excuse themselves. The first said to him, I have purchased a field, and I am under a necessity of going to see it; I entreat thee to make my excuse. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them, I beseech thee to make my excuse. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. And that servant returning, told his lord these things. Then the master of the house was angry, and said to his servant, Go out directly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the disabled, and the lame, and the blind. And the servant said, Sir, what thou didst command is done; and still there is room. And the lord said to the servant, Go out into the roads and hedges; and press them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men who were invited, shall taste of my supper. *And such will the divine conduct be with regard to the gospel.*

REFLECTIONS.

May the infinite mercy of God forbid that this should ever be our condition! The gospel-feast, like the sumptuous banquet of *Ahasuerus*, is of a very long standing: not only from week to week, but from age to age, God is sending to invite new guests; and, after all the millions that have been regaled by it, and nourished up to everlasting life, *there is yet room* for more. Still are his servants sent from one time to another, with all the fervour of the most affectionate persuasion, to urge sinners to accept of these desirable blessings; (for such only is the compulsion that becomes a feast, and suits the nature of reasonable creatures.) May we not *receive the grace of God in vain*? May we not perish, as thousands before us have done, by *making light* of the gospel!—It has often been observed from this parable, that they were lawful occasions which these unhappy people pleaded as their excuse for neglecting the invitation. And how many perish by what is indeed lawful! But the care of our estates or cattle, our domestic affairs, and our dearest relatives, will be destructive to us, if they be minded as our main care, and our hearts be so attentive to them as to forget the *one thing needful*.

Are we of the number of those who, though once blinded, impoverished, and enfeebled by sin, are now brought as welcome guests to the table which divine love has spread? Let us adore the grace which opened the door to us, and opened our hearts to comply with the call; by its strong and powerful, though rational and gentle influence, *compelling us to come in*. Let the servants employed in the message urge it with a becoming earnestness; as well knowing how much the heart of their great Master is in it, and how much the happiness of *souls* depends on their accepting it. Lord! may we see thy *table furnished with guests*, and ourselves be so happy as finally to partake of those blessings to which we are commanded to invite others! For *blessed indeed are they who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*!

SECTION CXXI.

Our Lord urges men to consider the difficulties of religion before they take up a profession of it. LUKE xiv. 25, &c.

- 25 **A**ND as great multitudes went with him *in this his journey*
 26 *toward Jerusalem*, he turned and said to them, If any one
 comes to me, and does not *act as if he did even hate** his father
 and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea,
 27 and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever
 does not bear his cross, and come after me, he cannot be my dis-
 28 ciple. For which of you, if he intend to build a tower, does not
 first sit down, and compute the expense, whether he have suffi-
 29 cient to finish it? Lest when he hath laid a foundation, and is not
 able to complete the work, all who see it begin to deride him,
 30 saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or
 31 what king, marching out to encounter another king in war, does
 not first sit down and consider, whether he is able with ten thou-
 sand men to meet *and oppose* him that cometh against him with
 32 twenty thousand? And if he finds he is not able, while he is yet
 at a distance, he, *to his great mortification*, sends an embassy, and
 33 desires terms of peace. So then *do you consider the matter*
well, before you determine, for whosoever he be of you that does not
resolve to give up all his possessions, whenever he is called to it,
 he cannot be my disciple.
- 34 Salt is a good thing; yet if the salt be grown insipid, with what
 35 can it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor for the dung-
 hill, but is thrown out of doors, and *trampled under foot*. You also
 will be no less useless and contemptible if, under the advantages and
 obligations of a christian profession, you are destitute of a sincere
 principle of integrity and piety. He that hath ears to hear let
 him hear.

REFLECTIONS.

May our most serious attention be fixed on so important a truth; and may this plain and candid declaration of our Lord be duly regarded by us, as ever we desire to find the advantage of that relation to him in which we are so ready to glory! If we would not be *cast out* with disdain, and *trampled under foot* as worthless and vile, let us be solicitous that there may be *the salt* of divine grace in our hearts; and let us undertake a religious profession with that deliberate consideration which becomes a matter of such great importance. A hasty purpose will never bear us through the difficulties we must expect to encounter; and rash vows, and thoughtless adventures, in this case, will only expose us to the derision of others, and the keener remorse of our own minds.

* One thing is said to be *loved*, and another *hated*, when the former is much preferred.

Nor is the nature and evidence of religion such as to have any reason to fear the severest examination. The demands of Christ are indeed high ; that the nearest relatives should be abandoned, and even life itself sacrificed for his sake ; that we be at least martyrs in resolution, and have so much of a reciprocal affection for him, as shall, like his love to us, be *stronger than death*. Yet how reasonable is the demand ! Did he leave his Father's bosom for us, and shall we scruple to abandon our houses and our kindred for him ? Did he expire on the cross for us, and shall not we be ready to *take up our crosses and follow him* ? Shall it not be delightful to us to trace his most painful steps, and by the most costly sacrifices to approve our gratitude and our duty ? Blessed Jesus, lead us ! and by thy grace we will follow thee, whatever be the path, whatever be the burden, whatever the terror of the way ; knowing that if we partake with thee in *thy sufferings*, we shall at length share with thee in thy consolation and thy glory !

SECTION CXXII.

The parables of the lost sheep and piece of money. LUKE XV. 1—10.

- 1 **W**HEN our Lord came out from the house of the Pharisee, he appeared in public teaching the people. Then all the
- 2 publicans and sinners, drew near to hear him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, and said, This man gives access to sinners,
- 3 and eats with them. But he spake to them this parable, and
- 4 said, What man of you that has an hundred sheep, will not, upon losing one of them, leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go
- 5 after that which was lost, till he find it ? And, having found it, he
- 6 lays it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, and says unto them,
- 7 Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. So I say to you, that greater joy will be in heaven over one penitent sinner, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need repentance.
- 8 Or, What poor woman, having ten pieces of silver money, if she lose one of them, will not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and
- 9 search carefully till she find it ? And when she has found it (*small as the value may seem*) she calls her female friends and neighbours together, and says, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece
- 10 of money which I had lost. So I say unto you there is joy among the angels of God, over one repenting sinner. Do not therefore wonder if I, to promote their joy, condescend to familiar converse with those whom you proudly despise.

REFLECTIONS.

How graceful and lovely does our Lord appear, while thus opening his compassionate arms and heart, to these wretched out-casts, for whose souls no man cared ! Who can choose but rejoice at this jubilee which he proclaimed among them, and at the cheerful attention which they gave to these *glad-tidings of great joy* ? May we, who are

his followers, never despise the meanest or the worst of men when they seem disposed to receive religious instruction ; but rather exert ourselves with a distinguished zeal, as knowing that the joy of the heavenly world in their recovery will be in some measure proportionable to the extremity of their former danger.

Let us often recollect the charity and goodness of those perfected spirits who look down from their own glory with compassion on mortals wandering in *the paths of the destroyer*, and who sing anthems of thankfulness and joy, when by divine grace they are reclaimed from them. Let every sinner be touched with a generous desire, that he who has been in so many instances the offence and burden of the earth, may become the *joy of heaven* by his sincere conversion. And let the solicitude with which the little possessions of this world are sought, when they are lost by any accident, engage us more earnestly to seek what is infinitely more valuable, our own salvation, and that of the immortal souls of others. May we in our different stations labour successfully for their recovery ; that we may another day share in that higher joy which angels and glorified saints shall express when they see them not only reduced to the paths of virtue and happiness, but fixed in abodes of eternal glory !

SECTION CXXIII.

The parable of the prodigal son. LUKE XV. 11, &c.

- 11 **W**ITH the same design of reproving the envy of the Pharisees, and encouraging every sincere penitent, our Lord uttered
 12 another parable. And he said, a certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his parent, Father, give me that
 13 portion of goods which falls to my share. And he divided his
 14 living between them. And not many days after, the younger son gathering all together, took a journey into a very distant
 15 country ; and there living in a riotous manner, squandered away
 16 his substance. And when he had consumed all, there was an
 17 extreme famine in that country ; and he began to be in want.
 18 And he went and joined himself as a servant to a citizen of
 19 that place ; who sent him unto his grounds to feed swine.
 20 And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat : and yet no man would take so much pity upon
 21 him as to give unto him one morsel of food. This led him to serious consideration ; and coming to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, while
 I am perishing with famine ! I will arise and go to my father ; and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son : make
 me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father.—But while he was yet at a considerable distance, his father saw him, and his bowels yearned over him, and he ran, and
 fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no

22 more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, bring out the best robe, and clothe him with it, and put a
 23 ring on his hand, and sandals on his feet. And bring hither the
 24 fatted calf, and kill it ; and let us eat, and be cheerful : For this my son, that was *considered by me as dead*, is restored to life ;
 25 and he who was lost, is found. And they began to be cheerful. But his elder son was in the field ; and as on his return, he approached
 26 the house, he heard music and dancing. And calling one of the
 27 servants, he inquired what was the meaning of these things ? And he said to him, thy brother is come ; and thy father has killed the
 28 fatted calf, because he has received him in good health. And he was angry,, and would not go in : His father therefore came out, and entreated him. But he replied to his father, Behold, I have served thee these many years, nor have at any time transgressed thy command, and yet thou hast never given me *so much as a kid*,
 30 that I might make an entertainment with my friends : But as soon as this thy son was come, who has devoured thy substance
 31 with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fattest calf. And he said to him, Son, thou art always with me, and all that I have is
 32 thine, *as thou art heir to my estate* : But it was fit we should feast and rejoice ; for this thy brother*, who was *looked upon as dead* is as it were alive again ; and he who was lost is found.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us here behold, with all due attention, the moving representation which our gracious Redeemer makes of the folly of sinners, and the compassions of God ; compassions which he describes as one who himself felt them, and who in this respect, as well as others, was *the express image of his Father*.—We have before us in this parable a lively emblem of the character and condition of sinners in their fallen state. They are thus impatient of the most necessary restraints ; thus fondly conceited of their own wisdom ; and thus, when enriched by the bounties of the great common Father, do they ungratefully run from him, and say unto God, *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*. Sensual pleasures are eagerly sought ; and perhaps all their earthly possessions and hopes are quickly paid as the price of them. While the means of obtaining these pleasures continue, not a serious thought of God can find a place in their minds : and then, perhaps, afflictions, heavy and complicated afflictions, come upon them ; yet even under that pressure they will often make very hard shifts before they will be persuaded to think of a return ; till at length divine grace, working in concurrence with providence, brings them to a better temper.

When they see themselves naked and indigent, enslaved and undone ; when they *come to themselves*, and recover the exercise of their reason, improving it to the only purposes for which it would have been worth while to have received it ;—then they feel the pangs of penitential remorse ; then they remember the blessings they have

* There is a lovely opposition between this and the 30th verse : the elder son had said, *This thy Son* ; the father in his reply tenderly says, *This thy brother*.

lost, and attend to the misery they have incurred. And hereupon they are disposed humbly to confess their folly, and to prostrate themselves in the presence of their heavenly Father: they put the resolution immediately into practice; *they arise and go unto him.*—But oh, let us behold with wonder and pleasure the gracious reception they find from divine, injured goodness! He *sees them afar off*; he pities, he meets, and embraces them; he interrupts their complaints and acknowledgments with tokens of his returning favour. *Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.* Thus does God welcome the humble penitent; thus does he open the arms of his love to embrace him, and the treasures of his bounty to enrich him. He arrays him with the robe of a Redeemer's righteousness, dresses him in the ornaments of sanctifying grace, honours him with the tokens of adopting love, and invests him with the glorious privileges and immunities of his children. And all this he does with unutterable delight: *he rejoices over him with joy; he rests in his love, and, as it were, rejoices over him with singing*; and this is the joyful language of the song, *My children that were dead, are alive again; and though they were lost, they are found.*

Let heaven and earth unite in the joy, and echo back the song. Let no elder brother murmur at the indulgence with which these prodigals are treated; but rather welcome them back into the family, and even encourage every thing that looks like a disposition to return to it. And let those who have been thus received, wander no more; but rather let them emulate the strictest piety of those who for many years have served their heavenly Father, without having in any notorious instances transgressed his commandments.

SECTION CXXIV.

The parable of the unjust steward. The Pharisees reproved for their covetousness and hypocrisy. LUKE XVI. 1—18.

- 1 **A**ND Jesus having rebuked the Pharisees for their envious and uncharitable temper, he said also to his disciples, There was a certain rich man who had a steward; and he was accused to
- 2 him, as having wasted his goods. And calling him, he said unto him, What is this that I hear of thee? Give an account of thine
- 3 administration; for thou canst be no longer steward. And the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my Lord is taking away my stewardship. I am not able to dig, and I am
- 4 ashamed to beg. I know what I will do; that when I am removed from my office, they may receive me into their houses.
- 5 And having called every one of his lord's debtors to him; he said
- 6 to the first, How much owest thou to my lord? And he said an hundred baths of oil. And he said to him, Take thy bill, and sit
- 7 down directly, and write another of but fifty. Then he said to another, And how much dost thou owe? And he said, An

- hundred homers of wheat. And he says to him, Take thy
 8 bill, and write fourscore. And *when the master heard of it, he*
 praised the unjust steward, as having done prudently. Thus,
said Jesus, the children of this world are wiser in their way and
 9 generation, than the children of light. And I also say to you,
 make yourselves *sure* friends with the unrighteous or *deceitful*
 mammon*, that when you fail, they may receive you into ever-
 lasting habitations; and you may for ever enjoy the rewards of your
 charity and love, in an everlasting friendship with those worthy per-
 10 sons who have been relieved by it. He who is faithful in the small-
 est trust, is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in the
 11 least, is unjust also in much. If therefore you have not been
 faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will intrust you with
 12 the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what was
 13 another's, who will give you *that which shall be your own*? No
 domestic can serve two masters; for he will either hate the one,
 and love the other; or he will adhere to the one, and neglect the
 other: so you cannot serve God and mammon.
 14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these
 15 things; and they derided him. And he said to them, You are
 they that justify yourselves before men; but God knows your
 hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men, is an
 16 abomination before God. The law and the prophets were *the only*
divine revelation among you until John the Baptist appeared; but
 from that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every one
 17 forces his way into it. Yet *think not that it was meant to supersede*
the original law of God, for it is easier for heaven and earth to
 pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fail. *As to the law of*
 18 *marriage in particular, as I have before declared*, Whosoever puts
 away his wife, and marries another, commits adultery; and who-
 soever marries her that is put away from her husband commits
 adultery.

REFLECTIONS.

May the wisdom of the children of this world in their comparatively trifling concerns excite a holy emulation in the children of light! Is it not much better worth our while to employ all the attention of our thoughts in observing opportunities for the good of our souls, and to exert all the force of our resolutions in improving them, than to labour merely for the *meat which perishes*, for that *deceitful mammon*, that treacherous friend, which will at best only amuse us for a few years, and will for ever forsake us in our greatest extremity? Let us take occasion from this parable, to think how soon we must part with all our present possessions; how soon we must *give an account of our* respective *stewardships* as those who must be *no longer stewards*. Let us therefore manage them in such a manner as may most effectually promote the great purposes of our everlasting happiness. To this

* Mammon or wealth, is here called unrighteous, or deceitful, on account of its being so apt to fail the expectations of the owners; and in that view is opposed to the true riches, ver. 14.

end, let us remember how absolutely necessary it is that we abound in works of charity and benevolence, and that we endeavour to abstract our hearts from an over-eager attachment to these *lying vanities* ; for surely the trifles of earth are no better. Let us not imagine that our particular address can find out the secret of *serving God and mammon*, since Christ represents it as an impossibility and contradiction.

May we be found faithful in what God has committed to us, whether it be little or much ; and govern ourselves, not by the maxims of this vain world, but by those of the gospel ! And if the same temper that led the covetous Pharisees to deride our Lord, engage the children of this world to pour contempt upon us as visionaries and enthusiasts, we have much greater reason to be grieved for them than for ourselves. Their censures can be matter of but little account to us, when we consider that the things which are *highly esteemed by men* are often *an abomination in the sight of God*. His law is sacred, and the constitutions of his kingdom are unalterable : may the temper of our minds be so altered and disposed as may suit it ! For another day, and another world, will shew that real Christianity is the only wisdom ; and that all the refinements of human policy without it are but specious madness and laborious ruin !

SECTION CXXV.

The parable of the rich glutton and Lazarus. LUKE xvi. 19, &c.

19 **T**HERE was a certain rich man who wore purple and fine li-
 20 nen, and daily feasted in a splendid manner. And there was
 a certain poor man, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full
 21 of ulcers. And he desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell
 from the rich man's table ; yea, the dogs came and licked his
 22 sores. But so it was, that the beggar died, and was carried by
 angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was
 23 buried. And in the unseen world* being in torments, he lifted
 up his eyes, and saw Abraham from afar, and Lazarus in his bo-
 24 som, (i. e.) *placed next the father of the faithful*. And calling out
 he said, O father Abraham, have compassion upon me, and send
 Lazarus, to dip the tip of his finger in water to refresh my tongue,
 25 for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, re-
 member that thou didst in thy life-time receive thy good things,
 and likewise Lazarus *his* evil things : but now he is comforted,
 26 and thou art *justly* tormented. And besides all this, between us
 and you there is a great chasm fixed : so that they who would go
 from hence to you cannot ; neither can they who are there come
 27 unto us. Then he said, I beseech thee therefore, O father, that
 28 thou wouldst send him to my father's house : For I have five
 brethren, that he may testify to them, that they may not also come
 29 into this place of torment. Abraham said to him, They have Mo-

* This is the general sense of the word *adης*. Both the rich man and Lazarus were in *Hades*, though in different regions of it.

30 ses and the prophets; let them hearken to them. And he said,
 Nay, father Abraham, but if one go to them from the dead, they
 31 will repent. But he said to him, If they hearken not to Moses
 and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one should
 arise from the dead.

REFLECTIONS.

Most evidently may we learn from this parable, that it is impossible to *know either love or hatred by any thing that is before us under the sun*. Who that had seen the pomp and plenty of this rich sinner, and compared it with the indigence and misery of Lazarus, would have imagined that the latter had been the child, and the former the enemy of God? But let us *judge nothing before the time*. Our Lord Jesus Christ shews us the period of all the prosperity of the wicked, and of the calamities with which good men may be exercised.—And what availed the luxuries of life, or the magnificence of burial, to a wretch *tormented in flames*? Surely the fierceness of those flames would be proportionable to the luxury in which he had formerly lived, and the sense of his torment be heightened by the delicacy he had once indulged. May God awaken those unhappy persons, whatever their rank in the present life may be, who place their happiness and glory in being *clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day*! May they lift up their enchanted, deluded eyes, and see that pointed sword of divine vengeance which is suspended over them by so weak a thread; and may they take this warning from one greater than *Moses and the prophets*, from one that *came from the dead* to enforce it, that they pass not into that place of torment!

Let poor afflicted saints take comfort in what has now been read, though they may be despised and slighted by men. The time will shortly come, when those angels who now descend in an invisible form to minister to them, will appear as their guard to convoy them to the regions of glory. *Abraham's bosom* will be opened to them, and the dainties of heaven be set before multitudes, who perhaps, while on this side the grave, hardly knew how to procure even the necessaries of life.—May we never view those seats of glory, as this wretched sensualist did, at an unapproachable distance! Let us think seriously of his deplorable circumstances, when he asked *a drop of water from the tip of Lazarus's finger*, and yet was denied. Dreadful representation! yet made by Christ himself, who surely knew how to describe the case with the utmost propriety. Behold, O our souls, this *son of Abraham*, in that flaming prison, in all the restless agonies of torment and despair; and we may judge what dependence to place on a descent from pious ancestors, or a participation of external privileges.

We inquire not curiously into the motives which engaged him to request that so extraordinary a warning might be sent to his brethren; whether it might proceed from a remainder of natural affection, from a fear of meeting them in the same misery, or from a mixture of both. It is enough to observe how and upon what principles it was denied, *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead*. Let none vainly excuse them-

selves from believing the evidence of the revelation God has given, on a pretence that if they saw signs and wonders *they would believe*. The heart of man may be hardened against the most sensible and immediate miracle ; but if that evidence were irresistible, it would ill become us to dictate to God when and to whom it should be given. Let us examine and acquiesce in such as he has seen fit to afford ; and pass through our various scenes of life as those that have eternity in view, and are persuaded we must each of us, in a few years, at furthest, be with Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, or with the rich man in that tormenting flame.

SECTION CXXVI.

Christ repeats his exhortations to an inoffensive conduct and a forgiving temper ; and warns his disciples not to arrogate any merit to themselves. LUKE xvii. 1—11.

- 1 **T**HEN he said to the disciples, It is impossible but offences should come ; nevertheless, we be to him by whom they
- 2 come. It were better for him *that* a huge mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and he *should* be thrown into the sea, than
- 3 that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves* : and if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him ;
- 4 and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day return to thee, saying, I repent ; thou shalt forgive him.
- 5 Then the apostles said unto the Lord, increase our faith. And
- 6 the Lord said, If you had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, you might say to this sycamore-tree, Be thou rooted up, and planted in
- 7 the sea, and it should obey you. But who of you, that has a servant ploughing, or feeding his flock, will say unto him, as soon as
- 8 he comes in from the field, Come in and sit down at the table ? Or will he not rather say to him, Make ready my supper, and gird up thy garments, and wait upon me while I am eating and drinking ;
- 9 and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink. Does he thank that servant because he hath done what was commanded him ? I apprehend not. So likewise ye, when you have done all that was commanded you, say, Surely we are unprofitable servants, for we
- 10 have done what we were obliged to do.—And as he went to Jerusalem, he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us renew our guard against every thing in our conduct which might *give offence* to the meanest and weakest ; and against every thing which might by a bad example mislead others, or furnish the

* This contains a strong and important intimation how much sin and scandal is occasioned by a severe, quarrelsome temper in the disciples of Christ ; as it not only stirs up the corruptions of those with whom they contend, but leads others to think meanly of a profession which has so little efficacy to soften and sweeten the tempers of those who maintain it.

enemies of religion with matter of reproach and accusation against it. Let us imbibe the *forgiving* spirit of the gospel, and, bearing in mind the numberless instances in which God has forgiven us, though we have sinned against him *not only seven times, but seventy times seven*; let us *arm ourselves*, in some degree, *with the same mind*, and endeavour to *forbear and forgive one another, even as God for Christ's sake has freely forgiven us*.

In a sense of the weakness of our *faith*, let us pray to Christ to *increase* it; and then those duties will be discharged with ease and delight which appeared most difficult in a distant prospect. Yet when *faith* and *patience* have had their most *perfect work*, when our Master's will has been borne with the most entire submission, and done with the most zealous dispatch, let us not pretend to place any *merit* in our own actions or sufferings; but let us think of ourselves as the servants of God, yea, as *unprofitable servants*, whose *goodness extendeth* not to our great Master: and to the riches of his grace let us ascribe it, that our feeble powers are strengthened to the performance of our duty; and that our worthless services are accepted, and the numberless deficiencies of them mercifully excused.

SECTION CXXVII.

Christ rebukes the intemperate zeal of James and John against those Samaritans who refused him entertainment; and heals ten lepers. LUKE ix. 51—56. xvii. 12—19.

AND it came to pass that, as the days were *almost fulfilled*, in which he should be received up to heaven, he resolutely set his face to go up to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers before his face, who in their progress entered into a village of the Samaritans to prepare entertainment for him. But they would not receive him, because his face was directed towards Jerusalem. And when his disciples, James and John, saw it, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we speak for fire to come down from heaven to destroy them, as Elijah did? But he, turning short upon them, rebuked them and said, Ye know not what kind of spirit ye are of: For the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went on to another village.

And as they entered into a certain village, there met him ten men who were lepers. And standing afar off, they lifted up their voice and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us. And seeing them [*with compassion*] he said unto them, Go, shew yourselves to the priests; *intimating that the cure should be performed by the way*. And it came to pass that, as they were going, they were cleansed. And one of them, perceiving he was healed, returned, glorifying God with a loud voice. And he fell down on his face at his feet, giving thanks unto him. And he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answered and said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the *other nine*? *How is it that none are found who have returned to give glory to God but this stranger?* And he said to him, Arise, go thy way; thy faith has saved thee.

REFLECTIONS.

Who would not have imagined that the blessed Jesus should have been most cordially welcome wherever he came, when there was grace in all his words, and benevolence in all his actions? Yet these *Samaritans would not receive him* because he was a *Jew*. And thus do unhappy prejudices, taken up on imaginary grounds, against men and things in the general, sometimes injure the best of men; and prove much more hurtful to the persons themselves by whom they are entertained.

The rash disciples would have called for fire from heaven; and let us observe how Christ treated the proposal. He treated it like himself; like the kind compassionate Friend of human nature: and also like one who well knew what was in man, and how little human terrors and severities can do towards producing a real conversion. Yet fire from heaven might have carried along with it some rational ground of conviction, which penal laws and sanguinary executions can never produce. What then would Christ have said to these disciples, if they had themselves proposed to smite with the sword, or to cast fire-brands into the houses of these inhospitable men? Little do they know their own spirit; little do they understand either the true genius or the true interest of the gospel, who have recourse to such violent methods as these to extirpate heresy and to propagate truth*. Let us bless God that neither the guilt nor the misery of such a conduct is ours. Let us learn to search our own hearts, that we may form a thorough acquaintance with ourselves; which will greatly promote both the comfort and the usefulness of life. Especially let us attend to our aims and intentions, and be greatly jealous over our own hearts, lest we indulge our irregular passions under religious pretences, and set up the standards of malice and pride in the name of the Lord.

From the story of the ten lepers let us learn importunately to seek the influences of Christ, to purge us from that far more odious and fatal disease which sin has spread over our whole nature; and, after the example of the Samaritan, let us own the mercy we have received. Have we not reason to fear that, of the multitudes who are indebted to the divine goodness, there is not one in ten who has a becoming sense of it? Let us labour to impress our hearts deeply with such a sense. Let us remember what it is that God expects of us; and let us further consider that, as the exercise of gratitude towards such a Benefactor is most reasonable, so also in proportion it is most delightful to the soul; it is indeed (as one well expresses it) like the incense of the Jewish priest, which, while it did an honour to God, did likewise regale with its own fragrancy the person by whom it was offered.

* See the Doctor's admirable Sermon against Persecution.

SECTION CXXVIII.

Our Lord cautions the Jews against expecting a pompous kingdom of the Messiah, and warns them of the approaching national destruction for rejecting him. LUKE xvii. 20, &c.

- 20 **T**HUS Jesus went on his journey to Jerusalem. And being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come ; he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with that *external pomp and observation of men which you*
 21 *expect.* Neither shall they say, Behold *it is* here, or behold *it is* there. For behold the kingdom of God is *already* among* you.
 22 And he said to his disciples, The time will come when you shall wish to see one of these days of the Son of man, and shall not
 23 see it. And they shall say to you, Behold *he is* here, or, behold
 24 *he is* there ; but do not you go out, nor follow them. For as the lightning which lightens from one part under heaven, shines in a
 25 moment to the other part under heaven ; so also shall the Son of
 26 man be in his day. Nevertheless, he must first suffer many
 27 things, and be rejected by this generation. And as it was in the days of Noah, so also shall it be in the days of the Son of man.
 28 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, and *their daughters* were given in marriage ; and *with security persisted in the business, and luxuries of life,* till the very day in which Noah entered into
 29 the ark ; and the deluge came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot ; they did eat and drink, they
 30 bought and sold, they planted and built : But on the day when Lot went out of Sodom, fire and brimstone was rained down from
 31 heaven, and destroyed them all. Even so shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed, *when he will display his power*
 32 *in the destruction of this sinful people.* In that day, if any one shall be on the house-top, and his *best dress and furniture* be in the house, let him not come down *into the house* to take it away ;
 33 *but let him flee† the readiest way :* And he that is *at work* in the field, *stripped of his garment,* let him likewise not return back, to
 34 *take it.* Remember Lot's wife, and take heed lest, like her, you *perish in that sudden vengeance, if you allow yourselves to linger.*
 35 *For he that shall seek to preserve his life shall lose it ; but he that shall be thought to lose his life, shall preserve it.* I tell you, in that night, *that calamitous time, the Providence of God shall be strangely seen, in delivering some of my disciples, when others in the very same circumstances shall perish :* there shall, *for instance,* be two persons in the same bed ; the one shall be taken *by the ene-*
 36 *my,* and the other dismissed. Two women shall be grinding to-

* It is certain our Lord could not properly say the kingdom of God was in the Pharisees to whom he spoke.

† Viz. by the steps which were on the outside.—This passage shews, beyond all controversy, that this discourse refers not to the final judgment, from which there can be no escape ; but to the destruction of Jerusalem, from which, it is well known, that many Christians were preserved by this caution.

36 together *at the same mill* ; the one shall be taken, and the other dis-
missed. Two men shall be *together* in the field ; the one shall be
37 taken, and the other dismissed.—And they answered and said to
him, Where, Lord, *shall this destruction happen* ? And he said to
them, Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered
together* : *wherever the impenitent and unbelieving Jews are,*
the vengeance of God will pursue them, and the Roman eagles shall
fly upon them as a helpless prey.

REFLECTIONS.

May our minds be formed to a true taste and relish for the *kingdom of God* ! and may we learn wherein it consists ; not, like the kingdoms of this world, in external pomp and splendour, but *in righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost*, and that inward subjection of soul to the divine government which is the essence of religion, and the grand security and felicity of our natures ! Many are, like the *Pharisees*, talking of it, and expecting it, while it is *among them*, and they know it not ; and, perhaps, despise the humble Christians in whom it resides, and most eminently triumphs. May they who think most lightly of it never have cause to wish at last for the return of those *days of the Son of man*, which are now their burden, rather than their pleasure, while they hear vital and inward religion in vain recommended and enforced !

What our Lord says of *his coming* to the destruction of *Jerusalem*, may be applied, as it is elsewhere, to his appearance at the final judgment, of which the former was a figure. Thus shall the men of *that generation* be immersed in business and pleasure ; and that tremendous day shall *come upon them, even as a thief in the night* ; so that they shall find themselves overwhelmed with irrecoverable ruin, while they cry, *Peace and safety*. And thus doth the awful hour of death, which consigns men over to judgment, surprise the generality of mankind, while they are thoughtless of it, and unprepared for its approach, amidst all the solemn warnings of it which they daily receive. May we be always in a prepared posture, and daily live as on the verge of eternity ! And if once we are engaged in a course of serious preparation, let us remember *Lot's wife*, and take heed that we *turn not back* again. We *flee as for our lives* ; let us not *look behind us*. Whatever is to be left, whatever is to be lost, it is enough if our *life be given us as for a prey*. If we have any just hope that it will be so given us, we have a great deal of reason to own and adore the riches of *divine grace* to us, of that distinguishing grace which has *taken us* when others are *left* ; some, perhaps, employed in the same business, and dwelling in the same place ; and, may not I add, some lying in the same bed too !

In a word ; let all seriously bethink themselves, and *flee from the wrath to come*. God spared not Judea, that favourite country, when they rejected his gospel, and his Son : *let us fear, lest he also spare not us*. In this respect also, *wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles*

* A common proverb, particularly applicable on this occasion, as there seems to be an allusion to the eagles on the Roman standards.

be gathered together. The same causes will produce the same effects ; and when we, in particular, of these happy, but sinful nations, consider our numerous and aggravated provocations, we shall see much greater reason to wonder that the judgments of God have been so long delayed, than that they should at last fall upon us with an insupportable weight.

SECTION CXXIX.

Christ recommends perseverance in prayer by the parable of the importunate widow ; and humility by that of the Pharisee and Publican.
LUKE XVIII. 1—14.

- 1 **A**ND for the encouragement of his disciples under those hardships which they might expect, he spake a parable to them, intended to inculcate upon them this great truth, that they ought always
- 2 to pray, and not to faint : Saying, There was a judge in a certain
- 3 city, who neither feared God, nor revered man. And there was a widow in that city who had been greatly injured ; and she came to
- 4 him and said, Do me justice against mine adversary. And he would not for a time : but as she persevered in her petition, he afterwards said within himself, Though I neither fear God nor
- 5 reverence man, Yet because this widow gives me trouble I will do her justice, lest coming perpetually she weary me out. And
- 6 the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God vindicate his own elect, that cry to him day and night, under the cruel oppression of their enemies, though he bear long with
- 7 them ? I say unto you, He will vindicate them ; and when he once undertakes it, he will do it speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes for this purpose will he find faith in the land* ? The persecution will be so severe, as almost to bear it down : but let what I have now spoken be a comfort to my people.
- 9 He also spake this parable to certain who trusted in themselves
- 10 that they were righteous, and despised others. Two men went up to the temple to pray ; the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee standing by himself, as more holy than others, prayed in this manner, " O God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men ; rapacious, unjust, adulterous ; or even like this Publican. I fast twice a week ; I pay tithes of all that I possess."
- 12 But the Publican standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, " O God, be merciful to me a sinner†."—I say unto you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other ; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased ; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

* The word *γῆ*, often signifies, not the earth in general, but some particular land or country : as in *Acts* vii. 3, 4, 11.

† The word *sinner* often signifies an abandoned profligate, or as we commonly express it, a wicked wretch.

REFLECTIONS.

How hateful is the character of this *unjust judge*, who neither feared God nor revered man, but centered all his regards in himself! How hateful, and how contemptible, in any circumstance of life; especially in a magistrate, the guardian of the public interest, in comparison of which he ought to forget his own! Yet even he was prevailed upon by *importunity*; and our Lord mentions it to encourage the fervour of our addresses to the throne of grace. What then, is the blessed God, like this unjust judge, to be *wearied out* with a peal of words, and thereby weakly induced to do what would otherwise have been contrary to his designs? Far from us be so absurd and so impious a thought! Our condescending Lord only intended to intimate, that if the repeated, importunate cries of the afflicted may at length prevail even on an inhuman heart, they will be much more regarded by a *righteous and merciful God*, who is always ready to bestow his favours when he sees we are prepared to receive them.—We may be sure that *God will vindicate his elect*: let this encourage them, though *the rod of the wicked may for a while rest on their back*; and let it intimidate the *proud oppressors* of the earth, who, in the midst of all their pomp and power, are so wretched as to have the prayers of God's people against them.

How instructive is this parable of the *Publican and Pharisee*! and how well connected with the former, to teach us that humility, without which repeated prayers will be repeated insults and affronts to heaven! Let us not *trust in ourselves that we are righteous, and despise others*; but rather be severe to our own faults, and candid to theirs. Behold this arrogant *Pharisee*, standing apart from the *Publican*, but as near as he could to the seat of the divine Majesty! And hear him boldly celebrating his own praises rather than those of his Maker! *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men.* We see a man may acknowledge it is the *grace of God* which makes the difference between him and others; and yet while he professes that humbling doctrine of the gospel, may be blown up with pride: yea, he may nourish and express that pride by the words in which he declares his faith. Mistaken creature! that imagined this encomium on himself was a prayer, and trusted in this defective morality, and these ceremonies of human device, while an utter stranger to real, vital religion. Happier, a thousand times happier, the poor *Publican*, when abasing himself in the dust; when *smiting on his breast*; when owning himself a *sinner*, and imploring the divine mercy as his only hope! Lord, we equally need it: may we with equal *humility* seek it! May we habitually maintain those views of ourselves which may promote that humility so necessary in order to the acceptance of our addresses, and therefore to the happiness of our souls. And indeed, if in our approaches to God we can place our confidence in any righteousness of our own, whatever we may imagine of our own knowledge or holiness, we have need to be *taught again the first principles* of both, and are strangers to the essentials of religion.

SECTION CXXX.

Christ opens the eyes of a man who was born blind ; and the sanhedrim examine strictly into the evidence of the miracle. JOHN ix. 1—23.

- 1 **O**UR Lord was now come to Jerusalem, at the feast of dedica-
 2 tion ; and as he was passing along he saw a man who had
 3 been blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying,
 4 Rabbi, Who sinned to occasion such a judgment ? This man himself
 5 in a pre-existent state* ? or had his parents committed some notorious
 6 crime, that he was born blind ? Jesus (*waving the curiosity of the*
 7 *question*) answered, it is not because either this man or his pa-
 8 rents have sinned, *as you suppose* ; but that the works of God might
 9 be manifested in him. I must perform the works of him that
 10 sent me, while it is day ; the night is coming, in which no man can
 11 work. So long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.
 12 —When he had spoken thus, he spat on the ground, and made
 13 clay with the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with
 14 the clay ; and *then* said to him, Go, wash at the pool of Siloam
 15 (which being interpreted, signifies Sent†). He therefore went
 16 away and washed, and came back seeing.
 17 The neighbours therefore, and they who had seen him before,
 18 and known that he was *always* blind, said, Is this he that sat and
 19 asked charity ? Some said, It is he ; and others, it is like him ;
 20 but he said, I am the man. They therefore said to him, How
 21 were thine eyes opened ? He replied, A man called Jesus, made
 22 clay, and having anointed mine eyes, said to me, Go to the pool of
 23 Siloam and wash ; and I went and washed and received my sight.
 24 Then they said to him, Where is he ? he said, I do not know.
 25 And they brought him who had formerly been blind to the Phari-
 26 sees in the great Sanhedrim. Now it was the sabbath-day when Je-
 27 sus made the clay, and opened his eyes. The Pharisees therefore
 28 asked him again, how he received his sight. And he said to them,
 29 He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed and do *now* see. Then
 30 said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he
 31 observeth not the sabbath. Others said, How can a man that is a
 32 sinner do such miracles ? And there was a division among them.
 33 They said again to the man, *who had been blind*, What sayest thou
 34 concerning him, since he hath *as thou declarest*, opened thine eyes.
 35 And he said he is a Prophet.
 36 The Jews therefore would not believe concerning him that he
 37 had been blind, and received his sight, till they had called the pa-
 38 rents of the man, who *maintained that he had thus* received his
 39 sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, of whom
 40 you say he was born blind ? How then doth he now see ? His pa-

* Most commentators agree that this refers to the notion the Jews had of the transmigration of souls. Perhaps the disciples put this question, to learn our Lord's sentiments on this subject.

† Which bears some analogy to the character of Jesus [and his name *Shi-loh*, Gen. xlix. 10.]

- rents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and
 21 that he was born blind : But how he now sees, we know not ; or
 who has opened his eyes, we know not *any more than he has told*
us ; he is of age, ask him ; he will speak concerning himself.
 22 These things his parents said *in this cautious manner*, because they
 were afraid of the Jews : for the Jews had already agreed, that if
 any one should confess *Jesus* to be Christ, he should be cast out of
 23 the synagogue and *excommunicated*. Therefore his parents said,
 He is of age, ask him.

REFLECTIONS.

Oh that the zeal of our great Master might quicken us his too negligent servants ! Still he is *the light of the world*, by his doctrines, precepts, and example. May our eyes by divine grace be opened to see, and our hearts be disposed to love and to follow this light ! It was a governing maxim with him, and he meant it also for our admonition, *I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day ; the night cometh, wherein no man can work*. We are sent into the world on an important errand, to *work out our own salvation*, and that of others : may we improve the present day ; and so much the rather, as we see the night approaching ! On some the *shadows of the evening* are already drawing on ; and as to others, their sun may go down at noon. Let us therefore, waving the curiosity of unprofitable speculations, apply ourselves seriously to the business of life, and zealously seize every opportunity of usefulness.

Our Lord, as it should seem unasked, and by the person on whom it was wrought unknown, performed this important and extraordinary cure. And the manner in which he did it is worthy of notice : He *anointed his eyes with clay*, and then commanded him *to wash*. Clay laid on the eye-lids might almost blind a man that had sight ; but what could it do towards curing blindness ? It reminds us that God is no further from the accomplishment of any purpose or event when he works with, than without means ; and that all the creatures are only *that* which his almighty operation makes them. The blind man believed, and received the immediate benefit of it. Had he reasoned, like *Nuaman*, on the impropriety of the means, he had justly been left in darkness. Lord, may our proud hearts be subdued to the methods of thy recovering grace ! And may we leave it to thee to choose how thou wilt bestow favours, which it is our highest interest on any terms to receive.

It must be a satisfaction to every true Christian to observe the curiosity and exactness with which these *Pharisees* inquired into the miracles of Christ, and how thoroughly they canvassed every circumstance of them. A truth like this need not fear any examination. Every new witness which they heard confirmed the case, and confounded the obstinacy of their unbelief.—But surely the weakness of *the parents* was very pitiable, who, in the midst of the evidence and obligation of such a miracle, were more afraid of incurring a human sentence than of offending God, by failing to own so great a favour, and to confess the blessed Person by whom it was wrought. *The fear*

of man bringeth a snare ; but they whose eyes Christ has opened in a spiritual sense will see a glory and excellence in him which will animate them boldly to bear their testimony to him, in defiance of all the censures which men can pass, or of all the penalties by which they can enforce them.

SECTION CXXXI.

The man who had received his sight is again examined before the sanhedrim, who excommunicate him. JOHN IX. 24—38.

- 24 **T**HE sanhedrim were not able to discover any fraud in the miracle, they therefore called a second time for the man who had been blind, and said to him, Give glory to God ; we know
 25 that this man is a *frofligate* sinner. Then answered he and said, If he be a sinner, I know not of it ; but one thing I know, that
 26 whereas I was blind, I now see. But they again said to him,
 27 What did he do unto thee ? how did he open thine eyes ? He answered them, I have told you already, and ye have not regarded :
 28 why would you hear it again ? Would you also become his disciples ? Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art this fellow's*
 29 disciple, but we are the disciples of Moses. We know that God spake to Moses ; but as for this man*, we know not from whence
 30 he is. The man replied and said unto them, Why, in this respect, it is strange that you know not from whence he is, and yet
 31 he has opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners, but if any man be devout, and do his will, him he hear-
 32 eth. From the beginning of the world it was never heard, that
 33 any man opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this man
 34 were not of God, he could do nothing. They answered and said to him, Thou wast entirely born in sins ; and dost thou take upon thee to teach us ? And they cast him out, *passing a solemn sentence of excommunication upon him.*
 35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out ; and finding him soon
 36 after, he said to him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God ? He answered and said, Sir, who is he, that I may believe on him ?
 37 Then Jesus said to him, Thou hast both *already* seen him, and he
 38 that is talking with thee is that very Person. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

REFLECTIONS.

So little does truth fear repeated examinations ; and thus does it, after every trial, *come forth like pure gold* out of the furnace. So did this miracle of Christ appear to these subtle adversaries ; so will the Christian cause appear to all who will diligently search into its evidence.—Who can forbear wondering at the obstinacy of these *Pharisees* ? and, on the same principles, at that of the present *Jews*, who,

* There is nothing in the Greek to answer to the distinction between “this fellow” and “this man.” ED.

while they acknowledge that *God spake by Moses*, because he wrought miracles, will not, on the evidence of yet more various and glorious miracles, and those attested beyond all contradiction, acknowledge the authority of the Son of God himself?

But we see this poor illiterate creature (for such he undoubtedly was) with the advantage of truth on his side, baffles all the sophistry of his most learned antagonists. *Great is the truth, and it will prevail.* Great is this truth, so fundamental to the gospel, that *Jesus is the Son of God* : and this also, which is so important to natural religion and revealed, that *God heareth not sinners* ; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do his will, him he hears, and most favourably regards. May we be truly devout, and add to our devotion an obedient regard to the divine will, and *the eyes of the Lord will be upon us, and his ears be open to our cry* ! Then, being favourably owned of God, we shall have no reason to fear the censures of men. If they cast us out, Christ will receive us, and perhaps reveal himself to us with more freedom, in proportion to the injuries we sustain from them.

SECTION CXXXII.

Christ admonishes the Pharisees of their danger ; and represents himself as the door of the sheepfold through which men must enter to be saved. JOHN IX. 39. &c. x. 1—10.

- 39 **A**ND while he talked with the man who had received his sight, the people gathering together about them, Jesus said, I am come into this world for judgment as well as mercy ; that they who
40 see not might see, and that they who see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees who were with him, heard these things, and
41 said to him, Are we also blind ? Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would not have any sin in comparison of what you have : but now you say, Surely we see, therefore your sin abides upon you.
- x. 1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, he who enters not by the door* into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a
2 thief and a robber. But he that comes in at the door, is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the door-keeper opens ; and the sheep
3 hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them
4 out to pasture. And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him ; for they know his voice.
5 But a stranger they will not follow ; but will flee from him, because
6 they do not know the voice of strangers.—This parable Jesus spake unto them ; but they did not understand what it was that he
7 said to them. Then Jesus said to them again, Verily, verily, I
8 say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me, are thieves and robbers : but the sheep have not heard
9 them. I myself am the door : if any one enter in by me, he shall

* It was customary in that country to have sheep secured within walls. Had they only such pens as ours, there would have been no propriety in speaking of the thief climbing up, or of entering by the door. E.D.

10 be safe, and shall go in and out and find pasture. The thief only comes that he may steal, and kill, and destroy ; I am come that they may have life, and that, *at length*, they may have it *yet more abundantly*.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us hear, with an holy awe on our spirits, that the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world *for* purposes of judgment as well as of mercy ; and make it our humble prayer that we may be enlightened by him, and not sealed up under aggravated darkness, as a punishment for our obstinacy and impenitence ; for then all the means of knowledge which we have so basely perverted will rise up to condemn us.

Let Christ be regarded by us as *the door* : [as that glorious person] from whom all true teachers derive their authority, and to whom they direct their administrations ; and let it be our care that we *enter by this door*. Let inferior *shepherds* learn their duty, so plainly suggested here : Let them learn to *know their sheep*, and take as particular notice as they can of each single person committed to their care ; and let them go *before them* in all the paths of duty : for what could the greatest enemy to the flock do worse than to lead them by example into the paths of destruction ?

Happy souls, who are entered in by this gate ! Their safety, their comfort, is secure ; they enjoy holy liberty and plenty, and *going in and coming out they find pasture*. If we are strangers to that entertainment and refreshment which arises from ordinances (those *green pastures* which Christ hath provided for *his sheep* in the wilderness) we have a great deal of reason to fear that we belong not to his flock. *He came that his sheep might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly* ; that greater provision might be made for their instruction and consolation now, till they are brought to those better pastures he intends for them above. May his grace prepare us for them ! and his hand will certainly conduct us to them ; nor need we fear the darkest passage in our way.

SECTION CXXXIII.

Christ describes himself as the good Shepherd. JOHN X. 11—21.

11 **O**UR Lord having represented himself as the door of the sheep, changed the similitude and said, I am the good shepherd, foretold in scripture under that character*. The good shepherd
12 layeth down his life for the safety of the sheep. The hireling indeed, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees away, and so the wolf seizes some of
13 them, and disperses the rest of the sheep. Now the hireling flies because he is an hireling, and is not concerned about the sheep.
14 But I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known
15 by mine ; even as the Father knoweth me, and owns his regard

* Isa. xl. 11. Ezek. xxxiv. 13.

to me, and I know, *acknowledge, and honour* the Father: and I lay
 16 down my life for the sheep *which he has given me*. And I have
 other sheep which are not of this fold*: them also must I bring
in, and they will hear my voice, and there shall be one sheep-fold,
 17 and one shepherd. For this reason does my Father love me, be-
 18 cause I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes
 it from me, but I lay it down of myself; *for I have power and au-*
thority† to lay it down, and I have power to resume it: this com-
 mandment I have received of my Father.

19 There was a division therefore again among the Jews, on ac-
 20 count of these words. And many of them said, He has a demon
 21 and is distracted; why do you hear him? Others said, These are
 not the words of a demoniac: could a demon open the eyes of the
 blind, *as it is plain this man has done?*

REFLECTIONS.

There is not, perhaps, any where to be found a greater instance of
 the force of prejudice than in these perverse Jews, who censured
 Christ as a lunatic and a demoniac, for one of the gravest and most
 excellent speeches that was ever delivered. Let us review it with
 all due attention and regard.—Let us consider Christ as the *good*
Shepherd, and humbly commit our souls to him, as ever we desire
 they should be safe and happy. We have known his kind regards to
 the flock in exposing and *laying down his life for them*. And he hath
 not laid it down in vain. Delightful thought! Our compassionate
 Shepherd, even when *the sword of the Lord was awakened to smite him*,
 has not so fallen as to rise no more; but as in this great and good
 work he voluntarily *laid down*, so he has also re-assumed his life;
 and still bears on his heart the same concern for his flock, and uses
 his renewed life and exalted dignity for their security and happiness.

Let us humbly acknowledge him as acknowledged by the Fa-
 ther: let us courageously and gratefully own him, and be ready to
lay down our lives also for him. We are those *other sheep*, of whom
 he spake *who were not originally of the fold*, but by his grace are now
brought in to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Let us pray
 that the boundaries of his fold may be still more extended, and the
 whole number of his elect accomplished; that all the flock may at
 length appear together, and may be conducted by him to the regions
 of that immortal life which he determines to give it.

In the mean time let us maintain all proper regards to him, and
 especially the most cheerful confidence in his care; repeating with
 evangelical views, and so with a peculiar sublimity of sense, those
 words of David as our own (*Ps. xxiii. 1—4.*) *The Lord is my*
Shepherd, I shall not want: he maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
he leadeth me beside the still waters: he restoreth my soul: he leadeth
me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake: yea, though I walk

* The elect of God among the Gentiles.

† So the word *ἐξουία* properly signifies.

through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

SECTION CXXXIV.

Christ, discoursing of his union with the Father, is charged with blasphemy; and, being assaulted by the Jews, retires beyond Jordan.
JOHN X. 22, &c.

22 **N**OW it was the feast of dedication at Jerusalem, and it
23 was winter. And Jesus was walking in the temple, in
24 Solomon's porch. Then the Jews surrounded him and said
unto him, How long dost thou hold us in suspense? If thou art
25 the Messiah, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I have *in*
effect told you, yet you believe not. The works which I do in my
26 Father's name, they bear witness of me. But you do not believe
because you are not of my sheep: *you are not possessed of such*
27 *simplicity as they discover; for,* as I said unto you, My sheep hear
28 my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto
them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any
29 pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave *them* to me is
greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's
30 hand. I and the Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones
32 again to stone him. Jesus answered them, I have shewed you
many good works from my Father: for which of these good works
33 do you stone me? The Jews replying said, We do not stone thee
for a good work, but for blasphemy; even because thou, being a
34 man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written
35 in your law (*Ps. lxxxii. 6.*) "I said ye are gods?" Now if he
called them gods to whom the word of God came, *merely with re-*
36 *gard to their office* (and the scripture cannot be broken*) *how* do
you say concerning him whom the Father hath sanctified and
sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am
37 the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me
38 not. But if I do, though you believe not me, *yet* believe the works
I perform, that ye may know and believe that the Father *is* in me
39 and I in him.—Then they sought again to seize him; but he es-
40 caped out of their hands, and went again beyond Jordan †, to the

* Or—This scripture cannot be set aside. W.

† The compound text of *Matt.* xix. 1, 2. and of *Mark* x. 1. (with which the author begins the next section) relating to the above circumstances, should have been interwoven with this passage. At present it has the appearance of a needless tautology. The editor has therefore begun the next section with the 3d verse, and thrown the passage omitted into this note. "And it came to pass that when Jesus had finished these discourses (§ 93—116) he arose from thence and departed from Galilee. And (after he had been at Jerusalem) he came into the borders of Judea, beyond Jordan, [*Mark*, by the further side of Jordan.] And great multitudes followed him; and the people who had formerly seen him at Bethabara resorted to him again; and according to his custom he taught them again, and healed them there." After this, the words v. 41. would naturally follow:—"And they said, John indeed, &c.

41 place where John was at first baptizing, and there he abode. And many came to him *there*; and *having attended upon his preaching*, said, John indeed did no miracle, but all things which John said of 42 this man were true. And many believed on him there.

REFLECTIONS.

It is worthy of remark, that we here see our Lord Jesus at a festival, appointed only by human authority, in commemoration of a national deliverance. He came from *Galilee* to observe it in the temple, though *it was winter*; and brought with him, as at all times, a heart glowing with the most ardent and amiable zeal for the honour of God and the salvation of men, even of those who were studying to insnare and destroy him.—What prudence, mingled with spirit and sweetness, runs through his answers to them! What inestimable blessings does he propose, to invite them to enter into *his fold*! May we never forget those gracious words! May we ever be entitled to all the comfort of them! *I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.* Lord, may we be found in the number of those secure and happy souls, even of those who *know thee*, and who *obey thy voice, and follow thee*, whithersoever thou leadest them, by thine example, thy providence, and thy Spirit! Then may we look on our eternal life and happiness as inviolably secure. Safely indeed may we trust it in his hands who could say, in so sublime and so glorious a sense, *I and the Father are one.* The enemies of our salvation must triumph then over omnipotence itself before they can wrest the sheep of Christ *out of his hands*; nor will his fidelity to God, or his love to them, suffer them to be seduced by fraud, any more than destroyed by violence. Blessed situation of thy *little flock*! O thou faithful, thou compassionate, thou Almighty Shepherd, gather thou our souls with theirs; and never suffer us to forget of how great importance it is that we still continue near thee, that we look up to thee for our defence and safety, and confide, not in our own power and wisdom, but in thine!

Who could have imagined that any heart could have been so base as to have intended evil, or any hands so cruel as to have armed themselves with instruments of death against such a person, while speaking such words as these? Yet behold, these Jews do it; and that even in so sacred a place as the temple itself; as the genuine offspring of those who *slew the prophet and priest of the Lord, even at his altar.* But his wise and gentle reply disarmed them for a few months; and the divine care and power in an extraordinary manner provided for his escape, and once more rescued him from their murderous hands. Happy the inhabitants of the country about *Jordan* to which he retired! especially happy, in that they *knew the day of their visitation*! The testimony of John the Baptist is now recollected to excellent purposes, though he himself was mouldering in his tomb: nor is there any thing which a faithful minister will more earnestly desire than that, even *while dead, he may yet speak*, for the honour of Christ, and the salvation of souls.

SECTION CXXXV.

Christ declares against divorces, and adds some other particulars relating to the married state. MATT. xix. 3—12. MARK x. 2—12.

AND [among others who attended Jesus at Bethabara] the Pharisees, came *hither* also to him *with the view of* tempting him, and asked him saying, *o* Is it lawful for a man to dismiss his wife for every cause *of dislike*? And he said to them in reply, Have ye not read (*Gen. i. 27.*) that God the creator, from the beginning of the creation, *in forming the first parents of mankind* made them *one male and one female*? and said*, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and adhere to his wife; and they two shall be “one flesh?” So that *it appears that they who are thus joined together* are no longer two, but one flesh. What God therefore has yoked together let no man separate.—They say unto him, Why then did Moses command *a man* to give *his wife* a bill of divorce, and so dismiss her? (*Deut. xxiv. 1.*) And he replied and said unto them, *How is it that you take this matter*? What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses permitted *a man* to write a bill of divorce, *and give it into his wife’s hand*, and dismiss her. And Jesus answered and said to them, [*it is true*] *but it was* on account of the hardness of your hearts *that Moses wrote you this precept, [or rather] gave you a permission to put away your wives; lest you should use them intolerably ill: but it was not so from the beginning.*

And in the house *where he lodged*, his disciples asked him again of the same matter. And he says to them, I tell you (*as I formerly did*) Whosoever shall dismiss his wife, except it be for† adultery and shall marry another, commits adultery against her *that was his former wife*: and he that shall marry her that is dismissed, commits adultery. And if a woman shall put away her husband and be married to another man, she *also* commits adultery.—Then his disciples say unto him, If this be the case between a man and his wife, it is not expedient to marry. But he said to them, All men cannot receive this saying, but they to whom it is given. For *as* there are some who are born *o* eunuchs, and there are some made *such* by the wickedness of men‡, there are *some also* who have *as it were* made themselves [*such*] on account of the kingdom of heaven, *having conquered the propensities of nature to be free from incumbrances, that they might promote the interest of my gospel.* He therefore that is able to receive *this saying*, let him receive it. *Let him choose a single life, who is in his own conscience persuaded that he can therein most glorify God.*

* Adam being taught by a revelation so to say, when the woman was first brought to him, this may be looked upon as a divine testimony, *Gen. ii. 14.*

† See Note (1) page 80.

‡ Referring to that scandalous traffic which the luxury and effeminacy of the East has rendered so common. [By a small liberty taken here, this passage is rendered less indelicate.]

REFLECTIONS.

From what we have been reading we may justly take occasion to adore the wisdom and goodness of divine Providence in creating the human species *male and female*, and providing for his new formed creature *Adam* so suitable and so amiable a companion, to enliven every other object of delight, and to crown the pleasures of *paradise* itself. Let us also acknowledge the apparent interposition of a wise and kind providence in maintaining such a proportion between the sexes, even to this day, which so apparently tends to the benefit of both, as well as to the support of the race in future ages; as also in perpetuating in their hearts through succeeding generations that mutual tenderness for each other which the purest bosoms may feel and avow, and which is the foundation of such an union of souls as no other friendship will admit.

Let those who are *married*, considering the indissoluble bond by which *God has joined them together*, make it their constant care to promote the comfort and happiness of each other: and let them most cautiously guard against every degree of contention, or even of distaste, which might at length occasion an alienation in their affections, and render so close a bond proportionably grievous.—Let none rashly run into these important engagements, nor determine their choice by light considerations, of a low and transitory nature. And if any, on the whole, prefer the freedom of a *single life* to a state which, with its peculiar comforts, must necessarily have its peculiar cares and trials too, let them diligently improve that disengagement, as an obligation to seek the *kingdom of God* with greater ardour, and to pursue its interests with more active zeal and application.—To conclude; since it appears in this respect, as well as in some others, that the gospel revokes some indulgences which the *law of Moses* gave, let us endeavour to form our hearts by divine grace to a wisdom, seriousness, and spirituality, which may suit this nobler dispensation; and while we are reading the precept of the Jewish legislator, let us remember we have a sublimer *Master*, and are to *do* and forbear *more than others*.

SECTION CXXXVI.

Christ blesses the little children that were brought to him, and rebukes his disciples who would have forbid them.—MATT. xix. 13—15.

MARK x. 13—16. LUKE xviii. 15—17.

AND while *Jesus continued here* they brought to him infants and young children, that he might touch them, or lay his hand upon them, and pray for them. And when his disciples saw it, they rebuked those that brought them *apprehending them too troublesome*. But *Jesus* seeing it, was greatly displeased, and said to them, Let the little children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to me: for of such* is the kingdom of God. I say unto you, Whosoever shall not

* I cannot approve of rendering *such as resemble these*.—I acknowledge this text will not of itself prove Infant-baptism to be an institution of Christ. [But an argument may be drawn from hence in favour of it.]

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receive the kingdom of God, *the Gospel dispensation and the blessings it promises*, as a little child, *with humility and meekness, simplicity and teachableness*, he shall not in any wise enter into it. And having called them to him, *ordering the infants to be brought*, he took them up in his arms, laid his hands upon them, and blessed them; *recommending them to the divine blessing and favour*. And he departed from thence to another place in the neighbourhood.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us make a pause here, that we may more attentively review this delightful and instructive sight; that we may see this compassionate *Shepherd of Israel* thus *gathering the lambs in his arms, and carrying them in his bosom* with all the tokens of tender regard, *rebuking his disciples* who forbade their coming, and *laying his gracious hands upon them to bless them*. How condescending and engaging a behaviour! how encouraging and amiable an image!—Let his ministers view it, to teach them a becoming regard to *the lambs of their flock*, who should early be taken notice of and instructed; and for and with whom they should frequently *pray*; remembering how often divine grace takes possession of the heart in the years of infancy, and sanctifies the children of God almost from the womb. Let every first impression made upon their tender minds be cherished; and let not those whom Christ himself is ready to receive be disregarded by his servants, who upon all occasions should *be gentle unto all, and apt to teach*.

Let Parents view this sight with pleasure and thankfulness: let it encourage them to *bring their children to Christ* by faith, and to commit them to him in *baptism*, and by prayer. And if he who *has the keys of death and the unseen world* see fit to remove those dear creatures from us in their early days, let the remembrance of this story comfort us; and teach us to hope that he who so graciously *received these children* has not forgotten ours, but that they are sweetly *fallen asleep in him*, and will be the everlasting objects of his care and love; *for of such is the kingdom of God*.

Let Children especially observe this. The great and glorious Redeemer did not *despise these little ones*; nay, he was *much displeased* with those who would have prevented their being brought to him. As kindly would he, no doubt, have received you, ye dear children, who read or hear this; as kindly will he still receive you, if you go to him in the sincerity of your hearts, and ask his blessing in humble and earnest prayer. Though you see not Christ, he sees and hears you; he is now present with you, to receive you, to bless you, and to save you. Happy the weakest of you when lodged in the *arms of Christ*! nothing can *pluck you from thence*, or ever hurt you there. In a word, let us all commit ourselves to him; and let us be disposed to *become as little children*, if we desire to *enter into his kingdom*. Let us not govern ourselves by the vain maxims of a corrupt and degenerate age. Let not pride, ambition, lust, or avarice, possess, torment, and enslave our minds; but, with the amiable *simplicity of children*, let us put ourselves into the wise and kind hands of Jesus, as our Guardian,

and refer ourselves to his pastoral and parental care, to be clothed and fed, to be guided and disposed of, as he shall see fit. For this purpose, O God, may we be *born again* by the *Spirit*, and formed anew by thy grace! since by this method alone we can be *made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*, and be so the *children of God*, as to be at length the children of the resurrection.

SECTION CXXXVII.

A rich young ruler applies to Christ for direction in the way to eternal life, but parts with him out of regard to his possessions. MATT. xix. 16, &c. MARK x. 17—31. LUKE xviii. 18—30.

AND as he went out into the way, behold there came* a certain *rich young* magistrate, running; and kneeling down to him he asked him saying, Good master†, What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said to him, Why dost thou call me good? None is good but one, *even* God. But if thou art determined to enter into life, keep the commandments. He says to him, Which? Jesus said, Thou knowest the commandments. "Thou shalt not kill: thou shalt not commit adultery: thou shalt not steal: thou shalt not bear false witness: thou shalt not defraud *nor* covet: honour thy father and thy mother: and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And the young man (*not apprehending the extent and spiritual meaning of these precepts*) replied and said to him, Master, I have observed all these from my infancy; What do I further need? And Jesus, when he heard these things, looking stedfastly upon him, loved him: *felt the emotions of complacency mingled with compassion*, and said unto him, One thing thou *still* wantest: if thou wilt be perfect, go thy way, sell all thy possessions, and distribute *the money* to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come take up the cross and follow me.—But when the young man heard that saying, he was troubled, and went away in great sorrow, for he was very rich, *and* had great possessions. And when Jesus saw that he was sorrowful to think of parting with his estate, he looked round about, and said to his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! Verily I say unto you, that a rich man will hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answering again, says to them, Children, how hard is it for them that *TRUST* in their riches (*as the generality do*) to enter into the kingdom of God. I say to you again, It is easier for a camel‡ to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And

* MARK "one."

† This was a title which the Jewish Rabbies affected, which might be one reason for our Lord's remark.

‡ *Theophylact* and others, for καμηλον read καμιλον, which they explain of a cable-rope. Others assert that there was near Jerusalem a low gate called *the needle's eye*. But the proverbial expression, as commonly understood, is agreeable to the eastern taste.

when his disciples heard this, they were struck into exceeding great and inexpressible amazement, saying one to another, Who then can be saved? But Jesus, looking stedfastly upon them, saith unto them, With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible*.

Then Peter replied, and began to say unto him, Behold we have left all and followed thee. What reward therefore shall we have? And Jesus answering said to them, Verily I say unto you, That you who have followed me in my humiliation, shall, in the great renovation† of all things, be suitably distinguished: when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; concurring with me in the sentence which shall then be passed on the Jewish nation. And there is no man who hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for the sake of the kingdom of God, that is, for my name's sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive manifold more, yea, an hundred-fold, now in the present time, more than all the comfort he could have found in houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands; with all the persecutions he shall endure: and in the world to come he shall inherit everlasting life. But many who are first in advantages, shall be last in the great day of accounts, and the last shall be first.

REFLECTIONS.

Who can behold, without weeping eyes and a bleeding heart, this lovely youth perishing in sin. What could have appeared more promising than this solicitous concern about eternal life in a young man, rich in the possessions and high in the honours of the present world! To see him running with such eagerness to the feet of a Redeemer, kneeling down with such humility before him, calling upon him by so honourable a title, and professing so sincere a desire of instruction, could not but lead us to conclude, Surely this man was not far from the kingdom of God; nor do we wonder that Jesus beholding him loved him. Who would not have looked on such an object with complacency! Who would not have expected that this *pleasani plant* should have brought forth grapes; but behold, it brought forth wild grapes! So have we seen, in the compass perhaps of our small observation and experience, many a fair blossom fall withering to the ground. So have the hopes of ministers and parents, and other religious friends, been disappointed with respect to many young persons, adorned with a variety of amiable qualifications, yet lacking one thing, and parting with Christ when put to the trial, after all the regard they have shewn to his name, and all the pleasing expectations they have given of a willingness to serve him. O my young reader,

* LUKE, "the things which are impossible with men—"

† By a small transposition here, the sense of the author's translation of this passage is more conspicuous.—Those who, with our translators, connect this with the former clause, understand it of the new state of things which Christ has introduced in the church on earth. Ed.

whoever thou art, I earnestly pray that thou mayest not be added to that number !

This unhappy youth imagined himself in the certain way of salvation because he was free from the stains of fraud and injustice, of adultery and theft, of perjury and murder, or any other gross and infamous sin. But behold, how awful a method Christ takes to open to him that insincerity of heart which he seems himself not to have known. Observe how strange a command he gives him, *to sell all, and distribute to the poor*. We cannot say that the very same is directly required of us ; yet, by this order that was given to him, we are obliged to part with *our all* when it cannot be preserved with a good conscience ; and by the general rules of Christianity, and by its fundamental precepts, we are in duty bound conscientiously to use, not only a little part of our substance, but even the whole of it for God, as *stewards* who are another day to give up a strict account for all. And if we like not Christ and glory on these terms, our end will be no better than his. Of him we read, that after all his morality, and all his zeal, *he went away from Christ (though sorrowful) because he had great possessions*. Oh dear-bought wealth, which was the price of his soul !

Let us look upon him, and receive instruction ; let us learn to be upon our guard against this vain world, that specious *harlot who hath cast down many wounded ; yea, many strong men have been slain by her*. How universally are riches desired, how eagerly are they pursued, by persons in all stations and of all professions of life ! Yet what do they generally prove but shining mischief and gilded ruin ! If we believe the incarnate *wisdom of God*, they make our salvation exceedingly hazardous. Yet who does not wish for them ? Who does not think that he has wisdom and grace enough to stand the danger ? But God knows otherwise, and therefore he keeps or makes, so many of his children poor.—Let them be contented with their safer state ; and let those who are rich be importunate with God for those influences of his grace which can effect those things that are *impossible with men*.

On the whole, let us not think much of any thing which Christ demands, knowing that whatever we may lose, or whatever we may resign, we shall gain far more by his favour. The testimony of a good conscience before him, a life of friendship with God, the consolations of his Spirit, and the hopes of his glory, will yield, even for the present, *an hundred fold* more satisfaction than the possession of the greatest riches, or the enjoyment of the most tender and beloved relatives. How much more abundantly then will all be repaid in the heavenly state ! And, if we cannot trust the promise of our Lord for it, we are no more real Christians than if we were publicly to worship *Mammon* or *Plutus*, with all the idolatrous rites of the ancient heathens.

SECTION CXXXVIII.

Christ, by the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, warns the Jews against envying the Gentiles those equal privileges to which they should be called. MATT. XX. 1—16.

- T**O illustrate the last observation, "that many who are first shall be last, and the last first," Jesus shaketh this parable. For the kingdom of heaven is like a man that was the master of a family, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. And having agreed with the labourers for a penny a day*, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out again about the third hour (or nine in the morning) he saw others standing unemployed in the market. And he said to them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is reasonable I will give you. And they went away to their work. Again, going out about the sixth and ninth hour (or at twelve and three) he did the same. And about the eleventh hour (or five in the evening) going out again, he found others standing unemployed: and he says to them, Why do ye stand here the whole day unemployed? They say unto him, Because no one has hired us. He says to them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is reasonable you shall receive.
- Now when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard says to his steward, Call the labourers and pay them their wages, beginning from the last, and going on to the first. And when they came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a penny. And when the first came they reckoned that they should have received more; but they also received every one a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the master of the house, and said, Truly these last have laboured but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us who have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered and said to one of them, Friend, I do not injure thee. Didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine and be gone; I will give unto this last man even as to thee. And indeed, is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good? Thus you see, in some instances, the last shall be first, and the first last†: for many are called, but few chosen.‡

* The Roman penny (7d1-2) was the usual price of a day's labour among the Jews, as well as the Romans.

† A remark which, though of far more extensive application, was peculiarly applicable to the Jewish nation, who murmured at the calling of the Gentiles to equal privileges with themselves.

‡ Though the messages of the gospel are sent to vast multitudes, a small remnant only will embrace them (*Rom. xi. 5.*) while the rest will be justly disowned by God for so obstinate and envious a temper.

REFLECTIONS.

May we by divine grace appear in the happy number of those who are not only *called* but *chosen* too ! If we are *first* in privileges and opportunities, let us be careful that our improvement be proportionable ; otherwise we shall be *last*, and see ourselves another day exceeded, and perhaps condemned, by those who stood in rank below us.—We are called to a course of holy *labour*, even to *work in our Lord's vineyard*, or in every station, whether public or private, to do our utmost to promote the glory of God and the happiness of mankind. Let us not, with so many calls and so many advantages, *stand all the day idle* ; but let us be active and patient, and cheerfully willing to *bear all the burthen and heat of the day* in so good a cause ; knowing that ere long *the evening will come*, and that he who employs us saith, *Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be*.—Let such as have long neglected the great business of life be encouraged with this thought, that some were *called at the eleventh hour* : but let none presume on their having such a call, nor strain the parable so far as to imagine that an *equal reward* awaits all, without any regard to their characters or improvements ; which is most contrary to the reason of things, to the word of God, and to the great intent of that day which is *to render to every man according to his deeds*.

The *Gentiles* are indeed now called to equal privileges with the *Jews*, to which this circumstance of the parable refers : and we all see how odious a temper it was in that favourite nation to be offended with the gospel on that account, which should rather have recommended it to their more joyful acceptance. Let us be careful to avoid every degree of *envy*, whoever may be put on a level with us, or preferred to us. Let us acknowledge the sovereign right of God to *do what he will with his own*, and let not our eye be evil, because he is good. To prevent this, let us labour after that *unfeigned love to the brethren*, which never will allow us to repine at their advancement to the greatest privileges, but will engage us to behold the favours that are shewn them with delight and satisfaction, and to rejoice in their honour and happiness as our own. So shall we exchange the basest and most uneasy passion of human nature for that which is of all others the noblest and the most delightful.

SECTION CXXXIX.

Our Lord, on the sickness and death of his friend Lazarus, determines to go to Bethany, against the persuasion of his disciples. JOHN xi. 1—16.

- 1 **N**OW while Jesus was on the other side Jordan, there was one Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and Martha her
- 2 sister, who was sick. (It was that Mary who afterwards anointed the Lord with precious ointment, and wiped his feet with her

- 3 hair*, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) The sisters therefore, knowing where Jesus was, sent to him, and said, Behold, he whom
 4 thou lovest is *dangerously* ill. But when Jesus heard it, he said, This sickness is not to death, but for the glory of God, that the Son
 5 of God may be glorified by it.—Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and *their brother Lazarus*. *They were his particular friends*.
 6 When therefore he had heard that he was sick, *intending what would be most for their advantage*, he abode two days in the place
 7 where he was. Then after that, he says to his disciples, Let us
 8 go again to Judea. The disciples say to him, Rabbi, but *just now* the Jews sought to stone thee, and dost thou *intend to go*
 9 *thither again* ? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day ? If any man walk in the day, he does not stumble, because
 10 he sees the light of this world. But if any man walk in the night, he stumbles, because there is no light in him†. *In like manner I am desirous to do the will of my Father while the day of life lasts*.
 11 These things he said to *silence their objections* : and after this, knowing what had passed at Bethany, he says to them, Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep, but I am going that I may awaken him.
 12 His disciples therefore said, Lord, if he sleeps he will recover. o
 13 Jesus spake concerning his death ; but they thought that he had spoken of taking rest in sleep. Jesus therefore said to them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad on your account that I was not there,
 14 that you may believe. But let us go to him. Then Thomas, who was called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, Let us also go that we may die with him, *rather than desert such a friend in a time of danger*.

REFLECTIONS.

How happy was this family of *Lazarus* in which Christ was so frequent a guest ! how happy *Lazarus* and *his sisters*, who were so peculiarly beloved by him ! Yet *sickness* and *death* invaded that family ; and this excellent man, as it should seem, in flourishing circumstances (ver. 19) and perhaps too in early youth, was snatched away, on a sudden, by what appeared a very untimely stroke. The friends of Christ must be sick, and die, as well as others ; and *no man knoweth either love or hatred, by all that is before them under the sun*. Let us therefore *judge nothing before the time*.—This sickness and death of *Lazarus* was for the glory of God : and may all our personal and domestic sufferings be so ! To this, O Lord, may our life be consecrated, and to this may our death be subservient ! We shall not then feel our dying pangs in half their bitterness, when our hearts are inflamed with a zeal for thy glory, and when we see that even those pangs are promoting it.

* Some have supposed, without any probable reason, that this refers to the story related by *Luke*, ch. vii. 37. § 60. and that the person was *Mary Magdalene* ; whereas she was of a town in *Galilee*, at a distance, of whom there is no proof that she was of a bad character. Besides, the great sinner mentioned by *Luke* is not named. Doubtless this sister of *Lazarus* is the person of whom *John* relates the action referred to, ch. xii. 3, &c. § 145.

† Rather, IN IT, that is, in the *world*. W.

Our Lord *delayed* his coming to this dear friend in his extremity ; and perhaps it occasioned, not only many an anxious, but many a suspicious, thought both to *Lazarus* and his sisters ; yet the intent of this delay was both gracious and important. Let us not limit our divine Master as to the time or manner of his appearance for us : let us not censure him if it be for a while put off. It is to exercise our faith and patience, and to make the mercy more signal and more welcome.—At length a resolution is formed to *go into Judea* ; though but a little while ago the *Jews* had assaulted him, even in a sacred place, with burning malice in their hearts, and the instruments of death in their hands. But when Providence called, *none of these things* could move our blessed Redeemer, *neither counted he his life dear unto him, that he might finish his course with joy*. May we shew the like intrepidity of soul in his service ! *walking in the day, that we may not stumble*, and taking all proper opportunities of performing the duties of life while the season of it lasts ; and then, when *the night of death comes*, it will close our eyes in peaceful slumbers. The repose of the breathless corpse, insensible of alarms, and sorrows, and cares, will be a lovely emblem of the sweet repose of the soul in the arms of divine love, till ere long Christ shall come to *awaken us out of our sleep* by that general resurrection of which this of *Lazarus* was a figure and pledge.

Let these glorious thoughts and expectations animate us to all the returns of affection, duty, and zeal. Let them teach us the temper of *Thomas* when he said, *Let us go and die with him*. Blessed Jesus ! how much better is it to *die with* and *for* thee, who art *the resurrection and the life*, than to prolong these wretched days of absence, meanness, and affliction, by forsaking thee when thou art leading us into danger !

SECTION CXL.

Our Lord raises Lazarus from the dead. JOHN xi. 17—46.

17 **T**HEN Jesus *went to Bethany ; and when he came near, he*
 18 *found that Lazarus had been now four days in the tomb.*
 19 Now Bethany was near to Jerusalem, *being but about fifteen fur-*
 20 *longs off.* And many of the Jews *who dwell there*, came to Mar-
 21 *tha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother. So that*
 22 *the news of Christ's approach was presently brought to them.* Mar-
 23 *tha* therefore, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went
 24 out to meet him ; but *Mary still* sat in the house. Then Martha said
 25 unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died.
 26 But even now I know that whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God
 27 will give it thee. Jesus says to her, *Thy brother shall rise again.*
 28 Martha says to him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrec-
 29 tion at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and
 the life : he that believes in me, though he be dead, *yet he shall*
 30 live ; and every one that is living and believes in me shall never die.
 31 Dost thou believe this ? She says to him, Lord, I believe that thou

art the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.

28 And having said these *words*, she went away, and called her sister Mary privately, saying, The Master is hard by, and calleth for thee.

29 As soon as she heard it, she immediately arose and came to meet

30 him. Now Jesus was not yet entered into the village, but continued in the place where Martha met him. The Jews then who were with her in the house to comfort her, seeing that Mary arose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, Surely she is going to the sepulchre that she may weep there.

32 Then Mary, when she came where Jesus was, fell down at his feet, saying to him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had

33 not died. Jesus, therefore, when he saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping that came with her, groaned in spirit and afflicted himself. And he said to the *relatives of his deceased friend*, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see.

35 And as they were going, Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said,

37 Behold how he loved him! But some of them said, Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that this man also

38 should not have died? Jesus therefore groaning again within himself, comes to the sepulchre. Now it was a cave, and a stone was

39 laid upon it. Jesus says, Remove the stone. Martha, the sister of the deceased, says to him, Lord, he now smells *offensively*, for

40 he has been [*buried*] four days. Jesus says to her, Did I not say unto thee that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory

41 of God? Then they took away the stone from the *tomb* where the deceased lay. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank

42 thee that thou hast heard me: And I know that thou always hearest me. But I speak *thus* because of the multitude that is standing

43 by, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And having said these words, he cried with a loud voice, "*Lazarus, come forth.*"

44 And he that was dead came forth bound (*as the dead usually were*) about his feet and hands, with grave-clothes, and his face also was bound about with a napkin. Jesus says to them, unbind him and

45 let him go. Many of the Jews therefore who had come to visit

46 Mary, and beheld what Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done, to stir them up to prevent his growing influence among the people.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us by faith continually regard Jesus (as his discourses and actions concur to represent him) as *the resurrection and the life*; believing, on this glorious specimen here given of it, that he can, and will finally cause *all that are in the graves to hear his voice, and to come forth*. A most delightful thought, which we should often apply both to ourselves and to our pious friends! Let the consideration, that they are to *arise in the resurrection at the last day*, moderate our sorrows for their removal, and forbid our mourning as others that have no hope. Were a resurrection on earth expected, though at the distance of several years, we should consider them only as persons absent on a

long journey, and expect their return with patience and cheerfulness : but oh, how much more certain is *the resurrection of the just* than the issue of any of our journeys or expectations in life !

We often go, in our thoughts at least, *to the grave to weep* ; but let us not forget to raise our contemplations higher, even to Jesus, who here expressed such tender sentiments of compassion, and *wept* when he saw the tears of others, though he knew he was going to *wipe them away* by restoring that friend whom they lamented.—*He afflicted himself*, and it may be proper for us sometimes to do it, and to hold down our thoughts to those views of things which may give us pain and regret ; if that attention be so adjusted and attempered as only to produce *a sadness of the countenance* that may *improve the heart*.

Let the modesty with which our Lord conducted this grand and solemn scene, teach us to avoid all mean transports of self applause, and all fondness for ostentation and parade. Like Jesus, let us *in all our ways acknowledge God*, and maintain a continual dependence on his influence, to be sought by fervent *prayer* ; and then we may go forth to every duty with a courageous and cheerful assurance, that he will carry us honourably and comfortably through it. Let us but stedfastly *believe*, and we shall *see the glory of God* : he will manifest his power for our help ; and when our case appears to be remediless, then is the time for his almighty hand to save. Let us adore and trust in him who was armed with so divine a power as to be able to rescue the *prisoners of death*, and to recover the trophies of the all-conquering and devouring grave. And if we are true *believers*, let us learn to take our part in the triumph with a joyful assurance, that though we putrify in the dust, and *after the skin worms devour our bodies, yet in our flesh we shall at length see God*.

It was surely a happy time that succeeded all the lamentations of these affectionate mourners. With what mutual congratulations and unutterable endearments did *Lazarus* and his sisters behold each other ! With what humble gratitude and adoration did they all prostrate themselves at the feet of their Almighty Saviour ! But who can conceive the greater transports which shall run through the whole redeemed world at the *resurrection day*, when piety and friendship shall be perfected, and those who were dearest to each other, both in the bonds of nature and of grace, shall spring up together to an immortal, undivided life ! In the mean time, let us trust our friends with him (with whom, if we are Christians indeed, we have trusted our souls) believing that the separations he appoints are prudent and kind, and that even our prayers for their recovery are denied in mercy.

SECTION CXLI.

The sanhedrim being informed of the resurrection of Lazarus, agree that Jesus should be put to death. JOHN xi. 47, &c.

47 **T**HE chief priests therefore and the Pharisees, *alarmed at the information [that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead]* convened the sanhedrim, and said, What are we doing ? for this

- 48 man *certainly* does many miracles. If we suffer him *to go on* thus, all will believe on him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation : *will destroy Jerusalem and extir-*
 49 *pate all our people.*—And one of them, Caiaphas, who was high-priest that year*, said to them, *while they were thus deliberating,*
 50 You know nothing at all ; nor do you consider that it is better for us that one man *though innocent*, should die for the people, than
 51 that the whole nation should perish. Now this he spake not of himself, but being high-priest that year, he *was moved by a secret impulse from God* and prophesied† that Jesus should shortly die for the nation, *in a much higher sense than he apprehended* : and
 52 not for the Jewish nation alone, but that he also might gather together into one *society* the children of God that are dispersed
 53 abroad.—From that day therefore they united their counsels that
 54 they might slay him. For this reason Jesus walked no more openly among the Jews, but went away from thence, into the country near the wilderness, to a *little city called Ephraim* ; and there he continued with his disciples.
 55 And the Jewish passover drew near : and many went up from the country to Jerusalem, before the passover, that they might purify themselves ‡. Then they sought for Jesus, and said one to another, as they stood in the temple, What think ye ?—that he will
 57 not *have the courage to come to the feast* ? Now both the chief Priests and Pharisees had given command that, if any one knew where he was, he should declare *it*, that they might apprehend him.

REFLECTIONS.

Where shall we find such restless, such causeless, such incorrigible malice, as was in the hearts of these rulers against our blessed Saviour ? What but divine grace can reclaim men, when to have heard of the *resurrection of Lazarus* from their own friends and confidants, who had just been eye-witnesses of it, instead of conquering their hearts, served only to inflame their murderous rage ! This is an instance where we evidently *see the place of judgment, that wickedness was there ; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.* The high-priest lays down a most dangerous, though plausible, maxim, which is in effect no other than this, “ That the murder of an innocent person by forms of law (which, as a *noble sufferer* observed, is surely the worst kind of murder) nay, even of a person who by miracles demonstrated that he was an ambassador from God, was to be chosen, rather than by protecting and obeying him, to give umbrage to an earthly power, which seemed superior to their own.” When will the politicians of this earth learn to trust God in his own ways, rather than to trust themselves, and their own wisdom, in violation of all the rules of truth,

* The high-priesthood was not *annual*, but the many revolutions about that time might justify such an expression.

† The Jewish high-priests in former ages had often been under the influence of a prophetic spirit.

‡ By some preparatory sacrifices. See 2 Chron. xxx. 17.

honour, and conscience ? Till then, like this foolish ruler, they will be caught in their own craftiness ; and it is more than possible that they may, in many instances, hasten the very distress they are contriving to avoid. For this was here the event : the Romans (called therefore *the people of Messiah the Prince*, Dan. ix. 26.) were sent as executioners of the divine vengeance, and the *Jews* were given up to a spirit of discord and madness, the terrible effects of which were such as cannot be read without horror, till *their place and nation were taken away* ; nor could even the *Roman general* forbear declaring that the hand of God was apparent in their destruction.

Let us attend to this divine oracle which God saw fit to put into the mouth of so wicked a man. Jesus has actually *died for the people, even for all the children of God that are scattered abroad*. His death is substituted instead of theirs ; and by it they are redeemed and delivered, and shall ere long be incorporated together, and all the happy colony be raised to an abode of eternal glory. Blessed harvest, which springs up from redeeming blood ! Heroic love of the dear Redeemer, which at the proper time brought him to Jerusalem, where he knew that *evil was determined against him* ! Let us follow him, in a courageous adherence to God and our duty, in the midst of danger and opposition ; and not wonder if we are set up as the marks of infamy and reproach, when we see Jesus marked out by a public mandate, as if he had been a robber or a murderer ; and find so numerous and grand a court of judicature requiring their subjects to seize this most generous Friend of the whole world, as the grand enemy of God and his country.

SECTION CXLII.

Christ, on his last journey to Jerusalem, prophesies of his sufferings there, and rebukes the ambition of James and John. MATT. xx. 17—28.
 MARK x. 32—46. LUKE xviii. 31—34.

THOUGH our Lord knew the resolution of his enemies against him, he was determined to go with his disciples, and appear in the temple at the passover. And as they were in the way to Jerusalem, Jesus went before them ; and they were amazed at his fortitude. And as they followed him they were afraid. And he took the twelve disciples again apart [*from the other company*] to himself, by the way, and began to tell them what things should befall him.—And he said to them, Behold we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written by the prophets, concerning the Son of man, shall be exactly fulfilled ; and the Son of man shall be betrayed and delivered to the chief priests and the scribes ; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him up to the Gentiles ; and they shall mock and spitefully treat him, and scourge him, and spit upon him, and shall put him to death, and even crucify him. And yet on the third day he shall rise again. But they did not understand any of these things, and this matter was hid from them, so that they knew not the meaning of the things which were spoken. [*But still expected Christ to erect an earthly kingdom.*]

Then the mother of Zebedee's children came to him, with her sons, James and John, worshipping him, and desiring a certain *favour* of him ; saying, Master we would that thou shouldest *promise* to do whatsoever we shall request. And he said to her, What wouldest thou *have* ? and to them, What would ye *desire* that I should do for you ? She says unto him, Grant that these my two sons—(and they said, Grant unto us, that we—) may sit, the one at the right-hand, and the other at thy left, *as thy chief ministers of state*.—But Jesus said to them in reply, You know not what you ask. Are you able to drink of the cup of which I am about to drink ? and to be baptized with the baptism with which I am to be baptized ? And they say to him, We are able. And Jesus says unto them, You shall indeed drink of my cup of which I am to drink*, and be baptized with the baptism with which I am to be baptized ; but to sit on my right-hand and on my left, is not mine to give, but to those for whom it is prepared by my Father.

And when the ten other apostles heard of it, they began to be much displeased, and were moved with indignation against the two brethren, James and John. But Jesus called them *all* to him and said unto them, You know that the princes of the heathen lord it over them ; and their great men exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you ; but whosoever would be great among you, let him be your minister † ; and whosoever would be chief among you, let him be your servant ; yea, the servant of all : for even the Son of man came not to be waited upon but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.—And *quickly after this* they came to Jericho.

REFLECTIONS.

Astonishing grace and compassion of the Son of God in going up to Jerusalem at this passover, when he so circumstantially knew all the things which were to befall him there ! not only that he should be *put to death*, but in *what manner* he should suffer ; and what cruelty and what scorn should introduce the last scene of his agonies ! Yet, with so sad a prospect in his eye, he marched on with distinguished alacrity, leading the company, as if he longed to encounter what they could not bear to see, or even to hear of. Glorious *Captain of our salvation*, give us the like alacrity in all the sufferings we are called to bear for thee !

Who would not grieve to see these good apostles still so much possessed with the spirit of this world, and still dreaming of preferment in a *temporal kingdom* ? Who would not especially lament it, that his most intimate friends, James, and John the beloved disciple, should be the persons who should come to him with this strange request ? Justly did our Lord answer them, *You know not what you ask*. And may

* It is observable that this James was the first of all the apostles who suffered martyrdom, Acts xii. 2. And John endured very severe persecutions ; being scourged by the Jews (Acts v. 40.) and banished by Domitian into the isle of Patmos (Rev. i. 9.) Tertullian also mentions a tradition, that at Rome he was plunged into boiling oil.

† The word *diaconos* [from whence the term *deacon* is derived] properly signifies a *servant* ; and *δoulos* in the next verse, rendered *servant*, imports one who is the property of another.

not the same answer often be made to *us*? When therefore he denies us the *great things* that we are seeking for ourselves, let us be satisfied with the denial he sees fit to give us; believing that it is wisdom and love, and not unkindness, that produces it.—Let us often ask ourselves, *Can we share the sufferings which our Lord endured?* If we do not desire to do it, so far as he shall appoint, we are not worthy to be called his disciples. Let us then *gird up the loins of our minds*, and wait our Master's signal to go forth to any suffering or service that he shall require; ever ready to make ourselves *the servants of all*, and therein to imitate the humility of the *Son of man*, who *came not to be ministered unto, but to minister*: yet, after all we can do or bear for him, let our trust still be in the merits of his righteousness and blood who *gave his life a ransom for many*. So shall we be fitted for those distinguished honours in the heavenly world, in comparison with which thrones and sceptres on earth are but empty pageants and childish toys.

SECTION CXLIII.

Our Lord, coming out of Jericho, cures two blind men, and converts Zaccheus the publican. MATT. XX. 29—34.*

AND as *Jesus and his disciples, in their way to Jerusalem*, were going from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And behold two blind men, who sat by the way-side, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. And the multitude rebuked them that they should be silent; but they cried out the more, Have mercy on us, thou Son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What do you desire that I should do for you? They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. Then Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes, and immediately they received sight, and they followed him.

MARK X. 46, &c. LUKE xlviii. 35, &c.

And it came to pass, as he was *yet nigh unto Jericho*, a certain blind man, Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, sat begging by the way-side. And hearing the multitude passing by, he asked what that meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was coming by. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth that was passing by, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me! And they who went before rebuked him, and many charged him that

* As both *Mark* and *Luke* mention only *one*, their narrative could not be interwoven with that of *Matthew*, who speaks of *two*, without a very awkward paraphrase; and such the author's, however ingenious, must be allowed to be. The Editor has therefore judged it most expedient to give the compound text of the two former Evangelists separate. Though they differ from *Matthew*, there is no contradiction between them; and we are to consider their narrative as relating to *Bartimeus* only, who being so particularly noticed, may be supposed (as the Dr. remarks) to have been a person of some note in that neighbourhood.

he should be silent. But he cried a great deal the more, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. Then Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called, and brought unto him. And they called the blind man saying to him, Be of good courage, rise, he calleth thee. And throwing aside his *upper* garment, he arose and came to Jesus. And when he was come near, Jesus answered and said unto him, What dost thou desire I should do for thee? And the blind man said unto him, Rabboni (*that is, my Master and my Lord*) that I may recover my sight. And Jesus said to him, Receive thy sight; go thy way, thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it gave praise unto God*.

The conversion of Zaccheus, LUKE xix. 1—10.

- 1 And Jesus *having entered and passed through Jericho, this new instance of his miraculous power drew the multitude after him.*
- 2 And behold there was a man in that country [*whose notice was attracted by the crowd that followed Jesus*] whose name was Zaccheus, who was the chief among the Publicans; or head-collector of
- 3 the customs; and he was very rich. And from the great things which he had heard, he sought an opportunity to see Jesus, what sort of a person he was; but he could not compass his design, because of the crowd; for he himself was very little of stature.
- 4 And therefore running before the rest, he got up into a Sycamore-tree that he might see him, for he was to pass that way. And Jesus, when he came to the place, looked up [*into the tree*] and saw him, and immediately said to him, Zaccheus, make haste and
- 6 come down, for to-day I must abide at thine house. And he came down with speed, and gladly entertained him.
- 7 And the persons who saw it all murmured, saying, He is gone in to refresh himself at a man's house who is a notorious sinner.
- 8 But Zaccheus stood forth and said to the Lord, Behold, O Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wrongfully taken any thing from any man, I restore him four-fold†. And Jesus said to him‡, Surely to-day is salvation come to this house, since
- 10 this man is also a true Son of Abraham: for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

REFLECTIONS.

Thus did our Lord Jesus Christ, wheresoever he came, scatter blessings around him, both to the souls and the bodies of men. Who

* This section, which is longer than many, may be conveniently divided here, and the Reflections on the former part (which seem improperly placed last) the reader may transpose; for which purpose a mark of division is made.

† This was more than he was bound to do by the law, which required only a fifth part more than the principal, besides the trespass-offering. *Lev. vi. 2—5. Numb. v. 7, 8.*—From Zaccheus's account of himself, which his accusers could not contradict, it doth not appear that he was *such a sinner* as they represented him, and as the Publicans generally were. *ED.*—See *Apb. Tillotson*, as quoted by the author; *Op. vol. iii. p. 86.*

‡ Or rather “concerning him.” *W. and Camb.*

can wonder that *Zaccheus* had a curiosity to see such a person ! And how happily did that curiosity end ! Christ graciously observed him, and, with an amiable frankness and openness of heart, invited himself to be a guest at his house ; choosing to accept the entertainment of a *publican*, and to distinguish with a particular regard one that was so desirous to see him. And let us diligently observe how happy a change this visit produced in the master of the family. O *Zaccheus*, well wast thou repaid for thine hospitality when *salvation* came to thine house, and the Saviour himself bore witness to thee as a son of *Abraham* !

What cannot the grace of God effect ! This publican was in the morning contriving only how he might increase his estate by all possible methods of gain*, and, before evening, he cries out, *Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor*. Thus does the Spirit of Christ operate on the soul, producing in it the fruits of righteousness and charity to our fellow creatures, as well as of love to God and faith in the Redeemer. And surely the miracle by which the walls of *Jericho* were many ages before thrown down by the sound of rams horns, was not greater in its kind than that which now triumphed over the heart of *Zaccheus*, and threw down all the obstacles which corrupt nature had formed against the entrance of Christ into it. Now were his eyes opened, and he saw in a moment how much more valuable the *pearl of price* was than all the riches he could part with to procure it. And he judged rightly of religion when he saw the necessity not only of *faith*, but of *charity* too ; and not only of *charity*, but of *restitution* also to those whom he had injured, without which the highest pretences to *charity* are but presenting to God *robbery* for a burnt offering.

Our Lord's progress is marked with another work of divine power and beneficence in opening the eyes of the blind. With what importunity was the cure desired ! And when the petitioner was for a while discouraged, with what eagerness was that importunity repeated, *Thou Son of David, have mercy on me !* Thus will the sinner cry to Jesus when he sees how much he needs him. But, alas ! men are not aware of their spiritual indigence and distress : *they say they are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing ; and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*.

When once they come to be awakened to a just sense of their case, there is then room for hope, and great encouragement for their address. We may in such circumstances say to them, as was said to *Bartimeus*, *Be of good courage, rise, he calleth thee*. With pleasure should we deliver such a message ; with pleasure should we lead on the lame and the blind, the weak and the trembling, in their application to Christ ; and in all the instances, in which his victorious grace is exercised, should join with those who have received it in *glorifying God*, and in celebrating the praise of this Deliverer, whom he has mercifully raised up for his people.

* See the preceding Note. *Zaccheus* appears to be speaking not of his *fortune* but his *past* conduct. Ed.

SECTION CXLIV.

The parable of the ten pounds. The vengeance taken by a prince on his rebellious subjects. LUKE XIX. 11—28.

- 11 **N**OW as they heard these things [from Christ with attention] he continued *his discourse*, and spake a parable, because he was drawing near to Jerusalem, and he perceived they thought that the kingdom of God would immediately be revealed, and that he, as
 12 the Messiah, would assume the government. He therefore said, A certain person of a noble birth, went to a distant country to receive a
 13 kingdom to himself, and intended to return*. And having called ten of his servants, he delivered to them ten pounds, *one pound† to each*; and said unto them, Trade with this money till I come.
 14 But his citizens hated him, and sent an embassy after him, saying,
 15 We will not have this man to reign over us‡. And it came to pass that, when he had received the kingdom and was come back, he commanded these servants, to whom he had delivered the money, to be called to him, that he might know what improvement each of them had made.
 16 And the first came near and said, Sir, thy pound has gained
 17 ten pounds more. And he said to him, Well done, thou good servant: since thou hast been faithful in a very little, I will amply re-
 18 ward it: be thou governour over ten cities in my dominions. And the second came, saying, Sir, thy pound has gained five pounds.
 19 And he said likewise unto this, Be thou over five cities. And another came and said, Sir, behold *here is* thy pound, which I
 21 have kept, laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man, *who* takest up what thou didst not lay down, and reapest what thou didst not sow; and therefore I did not ven-
 22 ture the money out of my hands, lest it should be lost. But he was filled with indignation, and says to him, O thou wicked servant: thou knewest|| that I am an austere man, taking up what I did not lay
 23 down, and reaping what I did not sow: And why didst thou not then give my money into the bank, that when I came I might
 24 have received it with interest?—And he said to them that stood by, Take away the pound from him, and give it to him that has
 25 ten pounds. (And they said to him, Sir, *as* he hath ten pounds already, it is sufficient. But the prince answered, So I resolve to
 26 act) for I assure you, That to every one that hath, it shall be given, but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be
 27 taken away from him. But those mine enemies, who would not

* That is, to take the government of his own country, after having received an investiture to it, from a superior prince abroad. The kings of *Judea* were thus invested with power by the *Romans*.

† The *Mina* contained sixty shekels, which, at 2s. 6d. the shekel, was 7210s.

‡ i. e. They sent ambassadors to the supreme court to enter their protest against his admission to the regal power; which well represents the solemn manner in which the Jews renounced Christ.

|| Or, interrogatively, "Didst thou know?" Ed.

have me to reign over them, bring *them* hither, and slay *them* in my presence.

Thus, as if our Lord had said, shall I at length appear, not as a temporal sovereign, but the eternal judge and ruler over all, when, having received power and dominion from my Father, I shall bring
 28 *all to their final account.*—And when he had spoken these things, he went on *his way* before his disciples, ascending to Jerusalem.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us also hear and fear. *Our Lord* is gone, and *has received his kingdom*. He has delivered to us our stock, to be improved in his service : let us be animated to diligence in it ; for proportionable to that diligence will be our reward. Let us remember we labour for ourselves while we labour for him ; as all the progress we make in wisdom and in goodness renders our own souls so much the happier, and will render them so to all eternity. Blessed servants that have the applause of such a Master, and share a reward as liberal as that conferred on a faithful steward, who should be made *governor of a province containing ten cities !*

Let us beware of a *slightful neglect* of our stock : let us beware of those *hard thoughts of God* which would discourage us from pursuing his service. Above all, let us take heed, that we do not proudly and insolently *reject the government* of his anointed Son, and either say with our tongues, or declare by our actions, *We will not have this man to reign over us* : for if we do, we *speak a word against our own lives*. He will be glorified by us, or upon us. And oh, what shall we do, if in that dreadful day he should *bring us forth* as the helpless prisoners of his justice, and command us *to be slain in his presence* ! How can we withstand his power ! or to the horns of what altar shall we flee for sanctuary ? *O Lord, our flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and we are afraid of thy judgments*. May we never be the miserable objects of them ; but having faithfully served thee here, may *that* be to us a day of honour, reward, and triumph, which shall be to every presumptuous rebel a day of shame and terror, of dreadful execution and eternal destruction !

SECTION CXLV.

Christ is entertained at Bethany, and his feet anointed by Mary. The Jewish rulers contrive to kill Lazarus. MATT. xxvi. 6—13. MARK xiv. 3—9. JOHN xii. 1—11.

THEN Jesus came, six days before the passover, to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, and whom he had lately raised from the dead. Now when Jesus was in Bethany*, in

* Few passages in the Harmony have perplexed me more than this. But on mature consideration, it appears to me more probable that *Matthew* and *Mark* should have introduced this story a little out of its place, than that theirs should be a different one from that of *John* : [the difficulties of which supposition the author states, but with much diffidence.]

the house of Simon, *called* the leper, they made a supper for him there ; and Martha waited, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at table with him. Then Mary took an alabaster pot, *containing* a pound of unadulterated ointment of spikenard, *which was* exceedingly valuable ; and, having broke *open* the vessel, she poured it on his head as he sat at meat, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with the tresses of her hair : and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.—But when his disciples observed it, there were some that were moved with inward displeasure, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made ? And they *secretly* murmured against her. Then one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, who was about to betray him, said *aloud*, Why was not this ointment sold† for more than three hundred pence, and given to the poor ? Now this he said not because he regarded the poor, but because he was a thief and kept the bag *which contained their little stock*, and carried|| what was put into it.

But Jesus knowing *the design of Judas and the censoriousness of the rest*, said to them, Why do you trouble the woman ? Let her alone, for she has performed a good work towards me. For the poor you have always with you, and whenever you please you may do them good : but me you have not always. She§ has done what she could ; for in that she has poured this ointment on my body, she has *in a manner* come before *the time* to anoint and *embalm* my body for the burial. I assuredly say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel is preached, over the whole world, this also which this woman has performed, shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

Now a great multitude of the Jews (*who had doubted whether Jesus would come up to the passover*) knew that he was there, in Bethany, and they came thither, not only on account of Jesus, but also that they might see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests, *who had resolved on the death of Jesus*, consulted how they might kill Lazarus also. For many of the Jews went away on his account, and believed on Jesus.

REFLECTIONS.

We see how happily *Mary* improved by *sitting at the feet of Jesus*, and what evidence she gave of her having *chosen the better part*. Like her, let us with humble thankfulness bestow *our very best* on him, who has given us that and every thing else. She gladly *poured out* her choicest ointment on him, whose name is to every true believer far more fragrant than ointment *poured forth*. How does her generous love shame those who grudge every expense in the cause of Christ !

When we are relieving the pious poor, we are, as it were, *anointing the feet of Jesus* : we are indeed performing a service far more ac-

† See on Luke vii. 38. § 60.

‡ MATTHEW, “for a great deal.”

|| Some render it “carried off.”—This would have been a fine booty for him; as the sum mentioned was about 10*l*.

§ JOHN.—“She has reserved this for the day of my burial.” The following passage explains this, and renders the insertion of it superfluous. Ea.

ceptable than any thing of this kind could in itself be. Let us remember that *we have the poor always with us* ; and that they are permitted to continue among us *that we may do them good whenever we please*. Far be it from us to imagine that what we so spend is *waste*. Let all who would not share in the guilt and punishment of Judas abhor the vile hypocrisy of making a pretended *concern for the poor*, a cloak for an opportunity of enriching themselves with their spoils ; than which nothing can be more infamous, or can have a directer tendency to mingle the consuming curse of a righteous and almighty God with all that a man possesses.

The *Pharisees* conspired to *kill Lazarus*. What a mixture was this of cruelty and folly ! What was his crime ? or what could their hope be ? From what death could not Christ have delivered him ? or from what *tomb* could he not again have recalled him ? Yet something like this is the madness of all who hate and persecute others for bearing the trophies of the Redeemer's victory and grace. But let not his servants fear : *their Redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is his name. His work is perfect* ; and the day and hour is approaching in which his triumph over all his enemies shall be so complete, that his friends shall be for ever secure, not only from being destroyed, but from being alarmed by them.

SECTION CXLVI.

Christ rides in triumph to Jerusalem on an ass's colt. MATT. XXI. 1—9.

MARK XI. 1—10. LUKE XIX. 29—40. JOHN XII. 12—19.

AND it came pass, on the next day (*which was the first day of the week*) that Jesus proceeded on his journey with his disciples ; and when they drew nigh to Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage and Bethany*, at the foot of the mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, Go your way into the village over-against you ; and immediately as soon as you enter into it, you shall find a she-ass tied, and a foal tied with her, on which no man ever yet sat : untie him, and bring *him* hither to me. And if any man say to you, Why do you untie *him* ? you shall say thus to him, Because the Lord has need of him ; and he will immediately send him hither.—And the disciples that were sent, went their way, and found, just as he had said unto them, the colt tied abroad at the door of a house, in a place where two roads met ; and as Jesus commanded them, they began to untie him. But as they were thus untying the colt, some of them that stood by, [*among whom were*] the owners of it, said unto them, o Why do you untie the colt ? And they said to them, even as Jesus had ordered, The Lord has need of him. And *being thoroughly satisfied* they let him go. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and the ass *its dam*, which went with it ; and they threw their mantles upon them, and they set Jesus thereon†.

* Some have supposed that there were two places of this name ; but the limits of the village from whence Christ came might extend to *Bethphage*.

† That is, on the mantle thrown upon the foal, which Christ chose to ride. John says, " Jesus when he had found a young ass sat thereon," which is superseded by the accounts of the other evangelists.

And a very great multitude, as he sat on the foal *r*, and went on to the city, spread their mantles in the way ; and others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the road. *An usual expression of joy on the arrival of any illustrious prince.*—Now all this was done that it might be accomplished which was spoken by the prophet, saying (as it is written *Zech. ix. 9.*) “ Say ye to the daughter of Sion, Fear not ; behold thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and *having salvation*, sitting upon an ass, yea a colt, the foal of an ass†”.

Now his disciples did not understand these things at first ; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written concerning him, and that they had done these things unto him.—And when he was come nigh to the city, and was now at the descent of the mount of Olives, a great multitude of people who were come to the feast of the passover, having heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, resolved to go and usher him in with the highest respect. Accordingly they took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried Hosannah ! blessed be the king of Israel who comes in the name of the Lord.—Now the people who were with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, testified to the strangers from the country. And for this cause the people also met him in the manner described, because they heard that he had done this miracle. And the whole multitude of the disciples that went before them, and they that followed, began to rejoice and to praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works which they had seen. And they joined together and cried, saying, Hosannah to the Son of David ! blessed be he, even the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. Blessed be the kingdom of our father David which comes in the name of the Lord ! Hosannah in the highest.

And some of the Pharisees among the multitude, offended at the honours paid to Jesus, said to him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said to them, I tell you that, if these should be silent, one might almost expect the very stones would *r* immediately cry out. The Pharisees then said to each other, Perceive ye not that you gain no advantage ? Behold the world is gone after him.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us behold this meek triumph of the great Redeemer with pleasure ! He entered the capital of his kingdom riding upon an ass ; a circumstance in which he made, though by no means a ridiculous, yet, to be sure, a very humble figure : yea, he appeared exactly as the prophet described him, upon a colt, the foal of an ass ; not yet grown up to its best form, nor adorned with any sumptuous or elegant furniture, but only covered with the mantles of his poor attendants, and perhaps with nothing better for a bridle than a cord, which might have tied the

† The ridicule which has fallen on this passage must be retorted on those that have cast it, for the Eastern asses are much larger and more beautiful than ours, and the patriarchs and judges thought it no disgrace to ride upon them. See *Jud. v. 10.* and many other places. The use of horses was forbidden to the Jews. [See the author's valuable note].

foal at the door.—Let us imagine that we saw the *Son of God*, and the *King of Israel*, thus proceeding towards *Jerusalem*, and the people meeting him, and surrounding him with their acclamations: *Hosannah ! Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord !* Do not our hearts spring at the sound ? Do we not, as it were in spirit, go forth with them, and join in their sublime, though simple, song ? Thus let us welcome him into our hearts ! Let us echo it back ! *Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord*, with divine authority, and divine blessings in his hands ! And *blessed be the kingdom* he hath erected ! May perpetual prosperity attend it ! May the north give up a swarm of subjects to it ; and may not the south keep back her swarthy sons ! May nations be born at once, and thousands together made willing in the day of his power ! Surely if these are not our affectionate wishes, the warm and zealous sentiments of our very hearts, it may almost be expected that the very stones should cry out, to accuse and condemn our ungrateful stupidity.

Unhappy *Pharisees*, who looked on these triumphs with envy and rage, and grieved that *the world was gone after him* ! Yet less unhappy, had they not renewed their attempts against him ; those fatal attempts which ended in their ruin ! But who, that had seen the procession, and heard the shouts of the transported multitude, could have imagined or believed, that before the end of the week they should have turned their voices against him, and instead of *Hosannah*, should have cried out, *Crucify him* ? yet so it was, and Christ knew it would be so. Such is the uncertainty of popular applause ! Who would then purchase it at the expense of his conscience, or even of his ease ? —These transports were raised by the hopes of a *temporal kingdom* ; and when those hopes were disappointed, these transports were turned into rage. Oh that there may be none, under all the engagements of a Christian, and even of a ministerial profession, who proclaim Christ with great appearances of zeal, only that they may exalt themselves ; and wish prosperity to *his kingdom*, only as it may promote their own interest in a world from which it was the great design of his death to redeem his servants.

SECTION CXLVII.

Christ weeps over Jerusalem, and vindicates the temple a second time from the profanation of the traders. MATT. xxi. 10—16. MARK xi. 11. LUKE xix. 41, &c.

THUS our Lord went on in his triumphant progress towards *Jerusalem* ; and when he came near it, beholding the city, he wept over it, saying, Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee when thine enemies shall draw a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and press thee on every side : and they shall level thee with the ground, and crush thy children within thee ; and shall not leave one stone upon

another in thee* ; because thou didst not know the season of thy visitation.

And Jesus entered into Jerusalem *amidst the acclamations of the people* ; and as he made his entrance, the whole city was in a commotion, saying, Who is this ? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth in Galilee. And Jesus went into the temple of God.—And when he had looked round about upon all things *there he began (as he had done three years before)* to drive out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the ex-changers of money, and the seats of them that sold doves. And he said to them, It is written, My house shall be called an house of prayer *for all people* ; but you have made it a den of robbers.

And the blind and lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and scribes beheld the wonders he performed, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, Hosannah to the Son of David, they were filled with indignation ; and they said to him, Dost thou hear what these *children* say ? And Jesus says to them, Yes : have you never read *what David says (Psal. viii. 2.)* “ Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise ? ”—And he was teaching daily in the temple : but the chief priests and the scribes, and the rulers of the people, sought *opportunity* to destroy him, and yet could not find what they might do *for that purpose* ; for all the common people listened to him with great attention. *They hung as it were on his lips while he spake.* GR.

REFLECTIONS.

Next to the sight of a bleeding and dying Redeemer there can surely be none in the whole world more affecting than this which is here represented ; even *the Son of God weeping over perishing sinners* ; yea, over the sinners of *Jerusalem*. We might, perhaps, have been ready to think that, foreseeing so circumstantially, as we know he did, all the ungrateful and inhuman treatment he was to meet with in this nest of murderers, with the scene of his sufferings, and the very house of Caiaphas in his full view, he should rather have *taken up a proverb* against it, and have anticipated the triumphs of that awful day when God would plead his cause with irresistible terror, and avenge the quarrel of his sacred blood. But behold, he seems to forget himself, and all his wrongs, great and cruel as they were ; and in the midst of a procession intended for his honour, he *melted into tears*, as if it were for the calamity of a friend, or a brother ; and says in the most genuine language of undissembled grief, *Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace !*

Behold, O our souls, with wonder and with awe, at once the goodness and severity of God : The sinners of *Jerusalem* wept over, and yet abandoned to ruin ! We have our part in all this : the tidings of the gospel are *the things which belong to our peace* ; the things on

* The accomplishment of every part of this prediction is recorded by *Josephus* in so affecting and particular a manner, that I cannot but recommend the perusal of it to every one who has opportunity.

which our everlasting happiness depends. Let us remember that the time will come in which, if we do not attend to them, they will be *hid from our eyes*. There is a limited *day* of mercy and grace; and therefore *to-day, while it is called to-day*, let us *hear his voice*, and not *harden our hearts*, lest slighted mercy at length retire, and vengeance take its turn; a vengeance which will fall the heavier, and pierce the deeper, in proportion to all the *long-suffering* and *goodness* which have been exercised towards us in vain. Let all, and especially the ministers of Christ, learn compassion to souls by such an example; and when the strongest efforts of love prove ineffectual for their recovery, let us at least be mourning for them before the Lord, and weeping over the ruin which we cannot prevent.

Though Christ had cleared the temple from the profanations of these *traders* at the beginning of his ministry, he found the same pollutions returned at the close of it. And, alas, how often do we find it thus with respect to our hearts! How soon do those weeds spring up again which we had been endeavouring with a resolute hand to root up; and how often are efforts for reformation forgotten, even when the attempt appeared at first to be most necessary! Let us learn of Christ not to be *weary of well-doing*, but with continued zeal renew our endeavours again and again.

The Scribes and Pharisees envied Christ; but the children surround him with their *Hosannahs*; and he graciously accepts their feeble accents of praise, as *ordained* by God out of the *mouth of babes and sucklings*. Nor will he now *despise the day of small things*. Oh that we might have the pleasure to see little children pronouncing the name of Christ with reverence and love! And surely we who are parents must add, with a peculiar accent, Oh that our own may join in the choir! May they learn the song from our lips; and may our whole lives be one continued visible proof of the devotion and affection with which we present it! *Amen.*

SECTION CXLVIII.

Some Greeks that came to the passover are introduced to Christ, who suitably addresses them, on his approaching death, and retires in the evening to Bethany. JOHN xii. 20—36.

20 **A**ND among those that came up to Jerusalem to worship at the feast, there were some Greeks: *persons descended from Grecian parents, but had forsaken their idolatry, and devoted themselves*
 21 *to the God of Israel.* These therefore came to Philip who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him saying, Sir, we desire to see
 22 Jesus. Philip comes and tells Andrew; and then Andrew and
 23 Philip told Jesus. And Jesus, *ordering them to be brought to him*, answered them saying, The hour is come, *the appointed time is at*
hand, that the Son of man must be glorified; and the *approach of these* Greeks is an earnest of the *flowing in of the Gentiles.* But
 24 *wonder not if my death is to precede it.* Verily, verily I say unto you, Unless a grain of wheat fall to the ground and die, it remains

alone ; but if it die it brings forth much fruit.—*As my servants*
 25 *must expect difficulties, I must inform these strangers that, he who*
 loves his life shall lose it ; but he that hates * his life in this world
 26 shall preserve it to everlasting life. If any man *would serve me,*
 let him follow me, and where I am there shall also my servant be ;
 and if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.
 27 Now is my soul troubled : and what shall I say or ask ? *Shall I*
say Father, save me from this hour ? Nay, but for this cause I came
 28 *to this hour.*—Father, glorify thine own name.—Then there came
 a voice from heaven *which said, I have both glorified it, and I will*
 29 *glorify it again.* The multitude therefore, who stood by and heard
 30 *it, said that it thundered : others said, An angel spake to him.* Je-
 sus answered and said, This voice came not *chiefly* for my sake, but
 31 for yours. Now is the judgment of this world, *which I am going*
to conquer and condemn : now shall the ruler of this world be cast
 32 out. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all
 33 men to me. Now this he spake signifying by what death he should
 34 die.—The multitude answered him, We have heard out of the law
 that the Messiah abides for ever ; and how *then* dost thou say that
 the son of man must be lifted up. Who is this Son of man ? Then
 35 Jesus said to them, Yet a little while the light is with you ; walk
 while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you ; for
 36 he that walks in darkness knows not whither he goes. While
 you have the light, believe in the light *and follow it, that you may*
 be the children of light.

These things Jesus spake *when the Greeks applied to him, and he*
 left them and departed. And when now it was late in the evening,
 he went out of the city to Bethany, with the twelve, and he lodged
 there, and concealed himself from them [*that lay in wait for him*]
Matt. xxi. 17. Mark. xi. 11.

REFLECTIONS.

Who can wonder at the desire these *Greeks* expressed to see so celebrated a Person as Jesus was ! We hope there was something more than mere curiosity in it, and that at length they saw him with believing eyes, and, according to his prediction, *glorified him* by a cordial acceptance of his gospel.—His disciples, we see, were ready to introduce them : and surely every faithful minister of Christ will undertake the task with pleasure when he sees souls awakened by divine grace, and inquiring after Jesus with affectionate concern.

Blessed be God, it has already, in many instances, been seen that by the death of Christ an immortal seed was sown, which has multiplied in all ages, and is still multiplying : Oh that it might have a greater increase ! One would think that words so gracious as these should promote that increase, and operate upon every heart to produce a love to him sufficient to conquer every danger and opposition which may be met with in his cause. Behold the promise which he has left upon record : *If any man, be he ever so mean and unworthy, will but faithfully serve and follow me, whatever his for-*

*See § 128, p. 220.

mer wanderings and rebellions may have been, *where I am, there shall also my servant be.* Happy state indeed ! not only, like these Greeks, to have a transient sight of Christ, but to be *for ever with him !* —How admirable is the love and stedfastness of our Redeemer, who procured so great a happiness for us at so dear an expense ! and even when his innocent soul was troubled in the view of his sufferings instead of declining them, met them with joy ! How should it animate us to renew that general, comprehensive petition, than which none can be more suitable to us with regard to all the divine dispensations ; *Father, glorify thine own name !* Glorify thyself, O Lord ! and to that great end dispose of us as thou pleasest ; for we should abhor ourselves if we had any interest separate from thine !

We may be assured, as certainly as by a *voice from heaven*, that this great end shall be answered ; and in this we should rejoice. Behold, *the prince of this world is cast out !* Behold, Satan is vanquished by Christ ! and *Jesus is lifted up* on the cross for a standard to all the nations. Behold the attractive magnet by which *all men* are to be drawn, by which all his chosen people shall be brought to him, and so raised up to heaven itself ! Let us look unto him from the ends of the earth, and labour with our cold hearts to awaken them to that lively and ardent affection which we owe to him who was crucified for us.

For ever adored be divine grace for this *divine light* which discovers to us so excellent an object ! May we use it to saving purposes, and so walk in it, as that we may appear to be the *children of light !* Let us think of that last distribution of mankind, when the children and heirs of light and of darkness are once for all to be separated. Let us think of the gloom of eternal night, which will shortly overtake those by whom the gospel is now despised ; and remember how much it will be aggravated by the light we have so long seen. Do thou, O God, at whose word light arose out of darkness, send forth by thine influences on our hearts *thy light and thy truth*, that they may lead and bring us to *thine holy hill* ; and that we may have the satisfaction of knowing *whither we go*, even when we walk through the dark valley of the shadow of death.

SECTION CXLIX.

John's reflection on the infidelity of the Jews. As Christ was returning the next morning to Jerusalem he curses the barren fig-tree. JOHN xii. 37—43. MATTHEW. xxi. 18, 19. MARK xi. 12—14.

NOW such was the perverseness of the Jews, and such their prejudice against our Lord, that though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they did not believe on him : so that the saying of Isaiah the prophet was fulfilled, which he spake in the name of Christ and his servants (Ch. liii. 1.) " Lord, who hath believed our report ? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ?" For this reason they were now in a manner incapable of believing, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere (Ch. vi. 10. § 65.) " He has in righteous judgment, blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, lest they

“ should see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and be “ converted and I should heal them.” These things Isaiah said when he saw his glory and spake of him.

Nevertheless, there were many even of the rulers who believed on him *as the Messiah* ; but they did not confess him on account of the Pharisees, lest they should be cast out of the synagogue : For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

And on the morrow-morning*, when they were come from Bethany, as he returned into the city, he was hungry. And on the way, seeing a single fig-tree at a distance, which had leaves (*and therefore appeared to be of the early kind*) he went to it to see if he could find any thing upon it to eat ; and when he came to it he found nothing thereon but leaves only : [*though had not the tree been barren, fruit might have been now expected upon it*] for the time of gathering figs was not yet come. And Jesus said to it upon this occasion, Let no man from henceforwards ever eat fruit of thee, nor any fruit hereafter grow upon thee†. And his disciples heard, and took notice of the words ; and the fig-tree immediately withered away : *Christ intending by that significant action to intimate, that the curse of God should thus wither and destroy the Jewish nation, which he had before compared to an unfruitful fig-tree.* See LUKE xiii. 6—9. § 116.

REFLECTIONS.

How evidently necessary is the operation of divine grace to conquer the prejudices of a sinful heart ! since even the preaching of Christ himself, enforced by all his stupendous miracles, could not overcome those prejudices without it. And how cautious should sinners be that they do not *stop their ears* to the joyful sound of the gospel, and *shut their eyes* against its glorious light ; lest God should leave them to their own delusions, and in his righteous judgment seal them up under final blindness and impenitence. Then will they never *be converted and healed* ; but die with that poison in all the faculties of their souls, which will make them for ever restless and miserable.

Can we find words sufficient to express the madness of these *Pharisees*, who, while they were in their consciences convinced that *Jesus was the Christ*, would not confess that conviction, and publicly pay their homage to him, *because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God* ? Strange infatuation of the human mind ! that it should be capable of believing there is a God, and yet of preferring the creatures before him : and should sometimes imagine the vain breath of popular applause or popular censure so considerable, as that God should be offended to please man ; and all the honours and rewards of his heavenly presence lost, to secure a little regard from those who are

* This refers to the close of § 148. Ed.

† The above expresses, in a few words, the sense of this passage according to the author's interpretation, and it appears to remove the difficulty attending it. Those who wish to see it defended, are referred to a long and excellent note upon the passage.

‡ We are to suppose that our Lord blasted this barren tree not from vexation and disappointment, but to convey a useful lesson to his disciples. Ed.

perishing in their crimes, and will ere long be themselves the objects of *everlasting shame and contempt*. May none of us ever indulge such a temper, or ever rest in an empty profession ; lest, being like *the fig-tree* before us, *which had leaves, but no fruit*, the curse of Christ should be pronounced upon us, which would immediately *with*er us amidst all our verdure ! Let us remember that this was intended as one of those significant actions by which the holy messengers of God frequently intimated approaching judgments. Happy would it have been if some, instead of searching out objections against it, had seriously considered its design, and the sad aspect with which it looks on those who, like them, *receive the grace of God in vain*.

SECTION CL.

Christ visits the temple again ; and, after a repeated effort to reform the continued abuses there, discourses with the people so as further exasperates the priests. MARK xi. 15—19. JOHN xii. 44, &c.

15 **A**ND, soon after the fig-tree had been [blasted] they come to Jerusalem ; and Jesus entering into the temple, as he had done the day before, observing that the traders were seated there again*, began to drive out them that bought and sold in the limits of the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and
16 seats of them that sold doves. And he permitted not that any one
17 should carry any vessel through the courts of the temple. And he taught the evil of such practices, saying to them, Is it not written, My Father's house shall be called an house of prayer, not for the Jews only but for all nations ? But you have made it a den of robbers, by profaning the place in which the Gentiles are to worship God, by unlawful gain.

JOHN xii. 44—50

44 And Jesus cried with a loud voice to the multitude now gathered about him, He that believes in me, believes not in me alone, but
45 in him that sent me. And he that sees me by a lively faith, does
46 in effect see him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that every one who believes in me, might not abide in darkness.
47 And if any one hear my words and will not believe, I do not now condemn him ; for I am not come at present to condemn the world,
48 but to save the world. He that rejects me, and does not receive my words, has one that judges him : the word that I have spoken, even
49 that very word shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself, but the Father who sent me, he gave me command-
50 ment what I should say, and what I shall yet speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life ; therefore whatever I say, I speak just as the Father has given me in charge.

* The author was of opinion, that this was the *third time* that our Lord performed this action of clearing the temple, because it is here intimated that he did it on his return from *Bethany* the next day after the shoutings of the children. But others consider this as the same story with that related by *Matthew* and *Luke*, § 147, and the objection might easily be answered.

MARK xi.

- 18 And the scribes and chief priests heard of what Jesus had done and taught ; and were so much offended that they diligently sought how they might destroy him ; for they dreaded him, because all
 19 the people were struck at his doctrine. And when the evening was come he went out of the city.

REFLECTIONS.

How hard is it to purge a carnal heart, and disentangle it from the snares of a deceitful world ! No sooner were these traders driven from the temple, but they return to it again ; and are as busy the next day in the pursuit of their unlawful gain as they had been before. And thus how often are convictions stifled by the love of this world ! And if the voice of conscience, or the word of God, may interrupt us for a while in our unlawful courses, yet where it may affect our worldly interest, how ready are we to return to them again, and with what difficulty are we brought so far to lay aside our earthly projects, as not to take them with us into the house of God ! Purge us, O Lord, from every irregular desire ; pursue and perfect thine own work ; and incline our hearts unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness.

Most important is that proclamation which our Lord made in the temple, and is still making to us in his word ; *believing in him, we believe in the Father ; and seeing him, we see the Father*. Let us be ready therefore to receive him out of regard to his divine authority, as well as with a view to our own happiness ; for without him we can have no access unto the Father, nor can we ever see him as a reconciled God.—The sacred light which he diffuses around him is not intended merely to amuse our eyes with pleasing speculations, but to animate our hearts with holy affections, and to guide our feet into the way of peace. If we desire therefore to escape an abode in eternal darkness, and to see light everlasting, let us faithfully follow him : otherwise we are condemned already, and that word which he spake will become to us a savour of death unto death, and will judge us in the last solemn and dreadful day, when it shall sentence those who would not be saved by it.

Let us now make that word the rule of our life, which shall then be the rule of our judgment. We may most comfortably venture our eternal all on the exact veracity of it. Christ has perfectly fulfilled the commission he received from his Father, as one that was faithful to him that appointed him ; and stands so completely approved in his sight, that our only hope is that we also may be accepted in him, and find mercy and grace for his sake.

SECTION CLI,

The disciples observe that the fig-tree was withered away ; Jesus confounds the sanhedrim, who questioned his authority, and reproves them by the parable of the complaisant but disobedient son. MATT. XXI. 20—32. MARK XI. 20, &c. xii. 1. LUKE XX. 1—9.

JESUS having spent the night with his disciples, in a retired place, returned to Jerusalem on the third day of the week in which he suffered. And in the morning, as they were passing by, when the disciples saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots, they wondered, saying, How soon is the fig-tree withered away ! And Peter recollecting what had passed, said to him, Rabbi, behold the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away ! And Jesus answering says unto them, Have faith in God ; for I assuredly say unto you, That if you have faith, and do not doubt, you shall not only do such miracles as this of the fig-tree ; but also whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed into the sea, and shall not doubt in his mind, but believe that what he says shall come to pass, it shall be done*. And for this reason, to encourage you boldly to act as God shall direct and instigate you, I say unto you, Whatsoever things you shall desire, and ask in prayer, to confirm your doctrine, believe that you shall receive them and you shall have them.

But let your prayers be offered in love as well as in faith ; and when you stand praying, forgive, if you have any matter of complaint against any, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive your brethren, and even your enemies, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.

And they came again to Jerusalem ; and when he was come into the temple, it came to pass that, as he was walking there, while he taught the people and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes, and the elders of the people, came upon him in a body, and spake to him with high displeasure, at his taking upon him to reform the temple, saying, Tell us by what authority thou dost these things, and who he is that gave thee this authority to do them ? And Jesus said to them in reply, I will also ask you one question ; and if you answer me, I will likewise tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, from whence was it ? from heaven, or of men ? Answer me this. And they reasoned among themselves saying, If we shall say, From heaven, he will ask us, Why therefore did ye not believe him ? But if we shall say, Of men, we fear all the populace will stone us, for they are all persuaded that John was really a prophet. And therefore they answered Jesus by saying, We cannot tell whence it was. And Jesus replied and said unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things. And he began to speak unto them and to the people by parables.

* MARK, " And shall be to him just as he says." D.

† LUKE, " On one of those days." The author omits this clause, because Mark has fixed the date of this fact ; and he apprizes the reader that for equally just reasons he has elsewhere omitted a few others.

‡ MATT. " One thing, which if ye tell me."

But what think ye [*of the following case ?*] *There was a man who had tow sons ; and coming to the first, he said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not ; but afterwards he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said in the same manner. And he answered and said, Sir, I am going ; yet he went not. Which of the two did the will of his Father ? They say unto him, The first. Upon this Jesus says to them, verily I say unto you, That the publicans and common prostitutes lead you the way into the kingdom of God, but with all your pretences to sanctity you will not follow them. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and you believed him not ; but the publicans and harlots believed him : and you, when you saw it, did not afterwards repent, so as to believe him. And therefore your condition will another day be worse than theirs.*

REFLECTIONS.

How little do the most specious pretences of piety signify if they are not animated by the heart, and confirmed by the life ! How vain are all the complimentary forms of religion when addressed to that God who penetrates all the secrets of the soul, and can have complacency in nothing but real solid goodness ! Yet how many are there, who are free of their *promises* both to God and man, but always fail when the time of *performance* comes ! And how many, with these unhappy rulers in Israel, go on to pride themselves in a kind of external nearness to God, and perhaps in a boasted commission from him, who are themselves *so far from his kingdom*, that even *publicans and harlots*, who did not pretend to any religion, are more like to be brought into it than they, as being more open to a conviction of their sin and danger, and so more ready to embrace an offered Saviour ! Let us dread the guilt of *receiving the grace of God in vain*, lest by rejecting the calls of the gospel, and abusing the privileges we enjoy, our hearts be *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*, so as to perish in impenitence and unbelief.

In vain do we, like these Pharisees, inquire into the evidences of Christ's authority, if we are not heartily resolved to submit to it. Yet with such cavillers and hypocrites must his ministers expect to meet. May they learn, by the example of their great Master, to answer them with the *meekness of wisdom*, and to join the *sagacity of the serpent* with the gentleness and innocence of the dove !

The promises which are made to a *miraculous faith in prayer*, are not indeed our immediate concern ; but we may truly infer from them some encouragement in favour of the *prayer of faith*, on whatever account, and in whatever circumstances it be offered. At least we may infer the necessity of *forgiving injuries*, if we desire that our petitions should be received with favour. Let us remember it ; and labour to approach the throne of a forgiving God, with hearts not only clear of every malignant passion, but full of that cordial and universal benevolence which may engage us to pray for all men, and particularly for those who have least deserved our kindness, and seem least disposed to requite it.

SECTION CLII.

The parable of the vineyard let out to unfaithful husbandmen. MATT. XXI. 33, &c. MARK XII. 1—12. LUKE XX. 9—19.

AND *Jesus said*, Hear another parable : There was a certain master of a family who planted a vineyard, and made a hedge round it, and digged a *place for a wine press* in it* ; and built a tower *for the accommodation and defence of the labourers* ; and let it out to husbandmen, and took a journey for a long time into a distant country.—And at the season when the time of the fruit approached, he sent his servants to the husbandmen that he might receive from *[them]* the fruit of the vineyard. And the husbandmen seized his servants, and beat one, and sent him empty away, and slew another, and stoned another. And he sent again other servants to them, more than the first ; but they did the same unto them ; and they threw stones at him *who was the chief*, and wounded him in the head and sent him away empty and shamefully treated.—And again the third time, he sent another *principal servant* ; and him also they wounded. And they even cast him out and killed him. And *in like manner they assaulted many others*, beating some and killing some.

Then the lord of the vineyard said, What shall I *further do to reclaim them* ? I will send my Son. Having yet therefore one son, his well beloved, he sent him also last of all to them, saying, Perhaps they will reverence my son when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they reasoned among themselves saying, This is the heir ; come let us kill him and seize on his inheritance, that it may be ours. And they seized him ; and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When therefore the lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do to those husbandmen ? They say unto him, He will miserably† destroy those wretches, and will let out the vineyard to other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons. *Jesus added*, You have answered right ; he shall indeed come and destroy these husbandmen, and give the vineyard to others.—For this reason I say unto you, That the kingdom of God, *which you have thus ungratefully abused*, shall be taken away from you, and given to a nation which shall bring forth the fruits thereof. And when they heard it they said, God forbid. And Jesus looked upon them, and said unto them, What is this then that is written ? (*Psalms cxviii. 22, 23.*) Did you never read this *passage* in the scriptures ? “The stone which the builders refused, the same is become the head-stone of the corner : this is the Lord’s doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes.” And therefore let me plainly tell you, That whosoever shall fall upon this stone, or stumble at me and my doctrine, while I am here on earth, shall be broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, when raised up to so glorious an eminence, it shall grind him to powder. And when the chief priests, and the Scribes and Pharisees had heard his parables, they in

* MARK. “A vat for the wine.”

† “Wretchedly.” D. Every reader will see the propriety of substituting the common translation.

that very hour sought to lay hands on him ; for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them. But they feared the people, because they esteemed him as a Prophet. And they left him and went away.

REFLECTIONS.

When we read this parable, and consider it as levelled at the Jews, we applaud the righteous judgment of God in revenging so severely upon them the *quarrel of his covenant*, and the blood of his Son ; but let us take heed to ourselves, *lest we also fall after the same example of unbelief*. God has given to every man some part of *his vineyard* to cultivate and improve, or some advantages to know and serve him. And as for us who enjoy the Christian dispensation, we have particular reason to say, *the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places*. *What could he have done more for this part of his vineyard?* How ungrateful therefore shall we be, and how miserable too, if we withhold the *fruits* he so reasonably expects ; if we slight the messengers by whom he so frequently and so pathetically demands them ; yea, if by wilful impenitence and unbelief we in effect renew the *slaughter of his beloved Son*, after that amazing favour he has done us, in charging him with an *embassy of peace* to us, whose aggravated crimes had long since deserved that he should have sent amongst us the messengers of his vengeance. Oh that we may never be *condemned out of our own mouths* in the censures we pass on the guilty Jews !

We cannot surely think of the awful threatening of our Lord without some secret terror for ourselves, when we consider how shamefully we of this nation have abused our privileges. *The kingdom of God*, said he, *shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof*. God had been just, had he long since executed such a judgment upon us : may he be merciful to us all in suspending and averting it ! May his compassion particularly extend to those amongst us who reject Christianity ! for the passage before us has a dreadful aspect upon such. Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear ; whether they will submit, or whether they will oppose ; *Christ is made the Head of the corner*, and God will for ever establish him as such. Wo to them who, instead of joining with him, and fixing the stress of their souls upon him, deliberately set themselves to oppose his cause and interest ! On such undoubtedly *will he fall like a mighty rock of adamant, and miserably crush them in pieces, and grind them to powder*.—Thus did our Lord warn his enemies most wisely and most graciously ; but they despised the admonition, and hated him for what was so kindly intended. *They sought to lay hands on him because he had spoken this parable against them*. High provocation indeed, to set their danger faithfully before them, that if by any means it were possible they might be awakened to escape it ! But, alas, what can save those whose spiritual distempers are exasperated by the most proper remedies prescribed for their cure ?

SECTION CLIII.

Christ further warns the Jews of their danger in rejecting the gospel, or resting in an insincere profession of it, by the parable of the marriage-feast and the wedding-garment. MATT. xxii. 1—14.

1 **A**ND Jesus answered and spake to them again in parables, say-
 2 ing, The kingdom of heaven is like a man *that was* a king,
 3 who made a marriage-feast for his son : And he sent his servants to
 4 call those who had been invited to the nuptial banquet : But they
 5 would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, tell them
 6 that were invited ; Behold, I have prepared my dinner ; my oxen
 7 and fatted beasts are slain, and all things are ready ; come to the
 8 marriage-feast. But not regarding *it*, they went away ; one to his
 9 field, and another to his merchandise. And the rest laying hold on
 10 his servants insulted and slew them. And when the king heard *of*
 11 *it*, he was provoked ; and, having sent his armies, he destroyed those
 12 murderers, and burnt their city. Then he says to his servants, The
 13 marriage-feast is prepared ; but they who were *first* invited were
 14 not worthy. Go ye therefore to the public ways, and invite as ma-
 15 ny as you find *there* to the wedding-banquet. And those servants
 16 went out, into the *public* ways, and assembled all that they met with,
 17 whether bad or good : and the feast was abundantly supplied with
 18 guests.—But the king coming in to view the guests, saw a man
 19 there not clothed with a wedding garment* : And he said to him,
 20 Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment ?
 21 And he was struck speechless. Then the king said to *his* servants,
 22 Bind his hands and feet, and take him away, and cast him into the
 23 darkness which is without ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of
 24 the teeth. For many are called, but few chosen.

REFLECTIONS.

How rich are the provisions of the gospel ! A *feast* indeed becoming the bounty and majesty of the King of heaven ; and proportionable even to the love which he bears to his own *Son*, in honour of whom it is made ! How wonderful is the grace which calls us to the participation of these provisions ; us, who were originally *sinners of the Gentiles, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise* ! Yet he has graciously sent his messengers to us, and invited us to his house, yea to his table, with the additional hope of yet nobler entertainments in reserve. May none of us reject so condescending a call, lest we turn his goodness into righteous indignation, and *treasure up to ourselves wrath against the day of wrath* !

Let us also remember, that it is not every one who professes to accept the entertainment, not every one who talks of gospel-blessings, and seems to desire a share in them, that will be admitted to it. No :

* Such a distinguishing habit was common at wedding-feasts, and often provided by the person who made the entertainment. In this case we are to suppose that it was contemptuously refused. [Or that this man stoie in among the guests without being properly introduced].

in order to our *partaking of an inheritance among the saints in light*, it is necessary that we be *made meet for it* by the holiness both of our hearts and lives. This is the *wedding-garment*, wrought by the *Spirit of God* himself, and offered to us by the freedom of his grace. And it is so necessary, that without it we must be separated from the number of his guests and friends, and even, though we had *eaten and drank in his presence*, must be *cast out into outer darkness*.

Frequently let us think of that awful day when *the King will come in to see his guests*; when God will take a most exact survey of every soul under a Christian profession. Let us think of that *speechless confusion* which will seize such as *have not on the wedding-garment*, and of that inexorable severity with which they will be consigned to *weeping and gnashing of teeth*. To have seen for a while the light of the gospel, and the fair beamings of an eternal hope, will add deeper and more sensible horror to those gloomy caverns: to have heard those *glad-tidings of great joy*, and to hear them, as it were, echoed back in accents of final despair, how will it wound the ear, and pierce the very heart! May God prevent it, by *fulfilling in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power*; that *the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us, and we in him*, when the *marriage supper of the Lamb* shall be celebrated, and all the harmony, pomp, and beauty of heaven shall aid its solemnity, its magnificence, and its joy!

SECTION CLIV.

Our Lord confounds the Pharisees and Herodians when they hoped to have enared him by their question about paying the Roman tribute.

MATT. XXII. 15—22. MARK XII. 13—17. LUKE XX. 20—26.

THEN the Pharisees went and took counsel how they might ensnare him in *his discourse*. And they watched him, and sent out spies to him, who should pretend themselves to be righteous men; *even some of the disciples of the Pharisees, and some of the Herodians; (a party zealous in the interest of the Roman government)* that they might lay hold on his words, to deliver him up to the power and authority of the *Roman governor*. And when they were come, they *accosted him with flattering expressions*, and asked him saying, Master, we know that thou art true; and sayest and teachest rightly; neither carest thou for any man; for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth. Therefore tell us, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful for us *Jews* to pay tribute to Cæsar, or not? Shall we give it, or shall we not give it? But Jesus, knowing their hypocrisy, perceived their craftiness and wickedness, and said to them, Ye hypocrites, Why do ye tempt me? Shew me the tribute money: bring me a penny that I may see it. And they brought him a *Roman penny*. And, he says to them, Whose is this image and inscription *which it has*? And they answered and said to him, Cæsar's. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render therefore to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's.—And when they had heard *his answer*, they could not take hold of his words before the people; and they wondered at his reply, and held their peace, and left him, and went away.

REFLECTIONS.

Again does our Lord renew the repeated lesson he had before given us, both by precept and example, of uniting wisdom and innocence. How admirable was this mixture of prudence and integrity with which he confounded these *Pharisees* and *Herodians*, who, contrary as their principles and interests were, conspired against him! *For of a truth, O Lord, against thine holy Child Jesus, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the people of Israel, were gathered together; and their words were softer than oil when war and murder was in their hearts.*—Let us not, with the simple, believe every flattering word, since sometimes the highest encomiums may be designed as the instruments of mischief: and too often they prove so, when they are not treacherously intended.

Our Lord was indeed the Person whom these artful hypocrites described; and was in that respect an excellent pattern to all his followers, and especially to his ministers. He *knew no man* in the discharge of his office; but, without regarding the persons of any, neither seeking their favour nor fearing their resentment, he *taught the way of God in truth, and declared the whole of his counsel.*

Let us particularly attend to his decision in the present case, and learn with the utmost readiness to render unto *Cæsar* the things which are *Cæsar's*, and unto *God* the things which are *God's*. Our civil magistrates, by virtue of their office, justly claim our reverent regard; and tribute is most reasonably due to those who attend continually to the service of the public, and are, under God, the pillars of our common tranquillity and happiness. Let that tribute therefore be justly and freely rendered with honour, and with cheerfulness; as he is surely unworthy to share in the benefits of government who will not contribute his part towards its necessary expense. But let it also be remembered that the *rights of God* are sacred and inviolable: he, and he alone, is the Lord of conscience; and when that is invaded, it is easy to judge whether man or God is to be obeyed. Let us be daily thankful that in our own age and country these rights are so happily united. May a guardian Providence continue to watch over both! and may we seriously consider how impossible it is, under such a government, to be good Christians, without being obedient subjects, or to fear God, if we do not honour the king!

SECTION CLV.

Our Lord proves the resurrection to the Sadducees, and answers their foolish objection against it. MATT. xxii. 23—33. MARK xii. 18—27. LUKE xx. 27—40.

THEN on that day in which our Lord had confounded the *Pharisees* and *Herodians*, some of the *Sadducees* came to him, who deny there is any resurrection of the dead, and asked him, saying, Master, Moses said and wrote to us (*Deut. xxv. 5.*) “That if a man’s brother die, and leave a wife, and no children behind him, his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed to his brother.” Now there were

with us seven brethren ; and the first, when he had married a wife, died, and having had no children, left his wife to his brother. And the second took her to wife ; and he likewise died childless. And *then* the third took her ; and in like manner also *all the rest of* the seven had her ; and they *all* died, and left no children. And last of all the woman also died. Therefore when they shall rise, *as you say they will*, in the general resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven ? for all the seven had her to wife. And Jesus answered and said to them, You are mistaken, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. The children of this world *indeed* marry, and are given in marriage : But they who shall be counted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, when they shall rise, neither marry, nor are given in marriage : For they can die no more ; since, *in this respect* they are equal to the angels of God in heaven, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

But as for *the evidence of the resurrection*, even Moses *in effect* shewed that the dead are raised*. Have ye not read in the book of Moses (*Exod. iii. 6.*) how God spake to him in the bush, what was *in effect* spoken to you by God, saying " I am the God of Abraham, and " the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Now God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living : so that all live unto him. Therefore you greatly err *in denying this doctrine*. Then some of the scribes said in reply, Master, thou hast spoken well. And when the multitude heard *this*, they were astonished at his doctrine. And after that, they (*that is, the Sadducees*) durst not ask him any thing at all, *but retired in silence and confusion*.

REFLECTIONS.

With what satisfaction should we read this vindication of so important an article of our faith and hope ! Easily was this boasted argument of the *Sadducees* unravelled and exposed, and all the pride of those bold wits, who valued themselves so much on that imaginary penetration which laid men almost on a level with brutes, covered with just confusion. Indeed objections against the *Resurrection*, much more plausible than this of theirs, may be answered in that one saying of our Lord's : *Ye know not the scriptures, nor the power of God*. Were the scripture-doctrine of the Resurrection considered on the one hand, and the omnipotence of the Creator on the other, it could not seem *incredible* to any that God should raise the dead.

How sublime an idea does *our Lord* give us of the happiness of those who shall be *thought worthy* to attain it ! *They shall be equal to the angels* ! Adored be the riches of that grace which redeems us from this degenerate and miserable state, in which we had made ourselves so much *like the beasts that perish*, to raise us to so high a dignity, and marshal us with the armies of heaven ! Let us esteem so glorious a hope aright, and with the greatest intenseness of soul pursue and insure it. And as for those enjoyments of this present world, which are

* MATT. "When at the bush, he calls the Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

sued only to the mortality and imperfection of it, let us moderate our regards to them, and cultivate those higher entertainments with the most solicitous care, which will be transplanted into the paradise of God, and ever flourish for the delight of his immortal children.

Christ, we see, argues a very important point of doctrine from premises, in which, perhaps, we might not have been able to have discovered it without such a hint. Let us learn to judge of scripture-arguments, not merely by the sound, but by the sense of the words. And as our Lord chose a passage from the *Pentateuch*, rather than from the prophets, for the conviction of the *Sadducees*, let us be engaged to study the tempers, and even the prejudices, of those with whom we converse; that we may, if possible, let in the light of divine truth on their hearts on that side by which they seem most capable of receiving it.

In a word, let us with pleasure think of the blessed God under that gracious title by which he manifested himself to *Moses at the bush*. Still he is *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*; the God of our pious ancestors, the God of all our departed friends who are now *sleeping in Jesus*: for all their souls now *live unto him*, and their bodies shall ere long be awakened by him. In like manner, if we are *followers of them who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises*, when we are gathered to our fathers, and our names perhaps, forgotten among succeeding generations, he will still be our God. He will shew us, by the blessed experience of eternity, that when he treated with us by that title, and admitted us into the covenant by which he bears it, he intended for us something far nobler and better than the transient scenes of earth and of time could admit.

SECTION CLVI.

Christ discourses of the first and great command of the law, and confounds the Pharisees with a question relating to David's calling the Messiah his Lord. MATT. xxii. 34, &c. MARK xii. 28—37. LUKE xx. 41—44.

BUT when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they were gathered together again, to try if they could any way expose him to the people. And one of the scribes, who was a doctor of the law, came with the rest, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him a further question, to make trial of him; and said, Master, which is the first and great commandment of all in the law? And Jesus answered him, Surely the first of all the commandments is that (*Deut. vi. 4, 5. x. 12.*) "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, even this (*Lev. xix. 18.*) "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." There is no

* This was a point that was often disputed by the Jewish doctors. It is observable that Christ answers the scribe out of a sentence which was written in the phylacterica.

other commandment greater than these. All the law and the prophets depend upon these two commandments.—And the scribe said to him, Truly, Master, thou hast spoken well: for there is one God, and there is no other beside him: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength; and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. And Jesus, seeing that he answered wisely, said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.

And while the Pharisees were gathered together, as he was teaching in the temple, Jesus asked them a question, saying, How say the scribes that the Messiah is the Son of David? What think ye concerning the Messiah? Whose Son is he? They say unto him, *The Son of David*. He saith unto them, How then does David himself, by the Holy Spirit, in the book of Psalms, call him Lord? saying, (*Psal. cx. 1.*) “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool.” If David himself therefore call him Lord, how is he then his Son? And the common people heard him with pleasure. And no man could answer him a word; neither did any one presume, from that day forward, to ask him any more *such ensnaring* questions.

REFLECTIONS.

Whatever might be the design of the scribe in putting this question to Christ again, which was in effect the same with what another had proposed before, (*Luke x. 25. § cvii.*) we have reason to rejoice in the repetition of so important an answer. Oh that it might be inscribed on our hearts as with the point of a diamond!—*The first and great commandment* requires us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; and the second, which is like unto it, to love our neighbour as ourselves. But, alas, what reason have we to complain of our own deficiency on both these heads! and how much need of being taught again even these *first principles of the oracles of God*! Can we say, with regard to the *first*, that the blessed God has the whole of our hearts? Is the utmost vigour of our faculties exerted in his service? Do we make him the end of all our actions, of all our wishes, of all our pursuits? Or are we indeed such equitable judges between ourselves and others as the *second* of these great commandments would require; so as to seek our own particular interests no further than they may be subservient to, or at least consistent with, the good of the whole? Do we make all those allowances for others which we expect or desire they should make for us?—Surely we must own we are far from having *yet attained*, or from being *already perfect*. But if this be not in the main the prevailing and governing temper of our minds, in vain are our *burnt-offerings* and our *sacrifices*; in vain are all the solemnities of public worship, or the forms of domestic and secret devotion; and by all our most pathetic expressions of duty to God, and friendship to men, we do but add one degree of guilt to another. Let us then most earnestly entreat that God would have mercy upon us, and by his Holy Spirit write these laws in our hearts.

On these subjects let *scribes instructed to the kingdom of heaven* insist, lest they be condemned by this expositor of the Jewish law. And let those whose notions are thus wisely regulated, take heed, lest, while they seem *near to the kingdom of God*, by resting in mere notions, they come short of it, and sink into a ruin aggravated by their near approach to the confines of salvation and glory.

As for that *question* of Christ with which the *Pharisees* were perplexed, the gospel has given us a key to it. Well might *David*, in *spirit*, call him *Lord*, who according to the *flesh* was to descend from his loins: for *before David* or *Abraham* was, *he is*. Let us adore this mysterious union of the divine and human natures in the person of our glorious *Emmanuel*; and be very careful that we do not oppose him, if we would not be found *fighters against God*. Already is he *exalted at the right hand of the Father*: let his friends rejoice in his dignity and glory; and with pleasure wait the day of his complete triumph, when *all his enemies shall be put under his feet*, and even [*death*] the last of them be *swallowed up in victory*.

SECTION CLVII.

Christ discourses with the Pharisees in the temple, repeating the charges and cautions which he had formerly advanced. MATT. xxiii. 1—22. MARK xii. 38—40. LUKE xx. 45, &c.

THEN Jesus, in his doctrine, spake to his disciples in the audience of all the people, *as he had formerly done*,* to caution them against the *pride and hypocrisy* of their leaders, saying, The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in the chair of Moses: All therefore whatsoever they shall charge you to observe, observe and do; but practise not according to their works: for they say, but do not practise. Beware of the scribes; for they bind grievous and insupportable burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with a finger of theirs. And all their works they do to be viewed by men. They make their *phylacteries* broad,† and make the fringes of their garments large. *These are the vain-glorious men*, who affect to walk in long garments, and love the uppermost places at feasts, and the highest seats in the synagogues; and salutations in the markets, and to be called by men, *Rabbi, Rabbi, at every word*. But be not you, *my disciples*, called *Rabbi*, for one is your Master, *even Christ*; and ye are all brethren. And call not *any one* on earth your father; for one is your Father, *even he in heaven*. Neither be ye called Masters; for one is your Master *even Christ*. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased; and whosoever shall humble himself, shall be exalted.

* Luke xi. 39, &c. § 110.

† The Jews (understanding *Deut.* vi. 8. xi. 18. in a literal sense) used to wear little scrolls of parchment, on which those passages were written, bound to their foreheads and wrists. They were called *phylacteries* in Greek, as being looked upon as a kind of amulet to keep them from danger.

Then Jesus, turning to those crafty enemies who stood around him, said, Wo unto you, ye Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men ; for you neither go in yourselves, nor permit them that are entering, to go in. Wo unto you, ye Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you devour the houses of widows, and for a pretence make long prayers : therefore shall you receive greater damnation. Wo unto you, ye Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for you compass the sea and the land to make one proselyte, and when he is become so, you make him doubly more a child of hell than yourselves. Wo unto you, ye blind guides ! who say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing ; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is obliged by it. Ye foolish and blind creatures : for which is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifies the gold ? And ye also say, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing ; but whoever shall swear by the gift which is upon it, he is obliged to the performance of his oath. Ye foolish and blind wretches : for which is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift ? Therefore he that swears by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things that are upon it. And he that swears by the temple, swears by it, and by him also that dwells in it. And he that swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God, and by him who sits upon it.

REFLECTIONS.

As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprov-er upon an obedient ear. Christ was indeed a wise and faithful Re-prover ; but the ears of these Pharisees were disobedient and uncircumcised. Let us, however, who are his disciples, attend to these instructions of our heavenly Master, and avoid every thing which has the remotest tendency to what he here condemns with so just a severity.

Let not our zeal spend itself upon the externals of religion. Let us not impose heavy burdens upon each other ; nor lay down rules for the conduct of others, by which we do not in like circumstances think fit to govern ourselves. Let us not impose our own decisions in a magisterial manner on our fellow Christians, nor affect to be called fathers, masters, and teachers ; remembering that *Christ alone is our Master, and God our Father*, and that it is a dangerous presumption and folly to set ourselves in the place of either. Let us be upon our guard against that vain ostentation that would lead us to place any part of our happiness in precedence, and to value ourselves upon our rank, or upon any airy titles of honour, by which, perhaps rather by accident than merit, we are distinguished from others ; and which to a truly wise man, and especially to an humble follower of Jesus, will appear to be a very little matter. Let us desire that honour which arises from condescending to others, and serving them in love ; that honour which springs from the divine approbation, which it will be impossible to secure without unaffected piety.

God forbid that our devotions should ever be intended as a *cloak of maliciousness*, or as the instrument of serving any mean and vile purpose ! Such prayers would return in curses on our own heads, and draw down on them aggravated damnation. God forbid that we

should spend that time, and that ardency of spirit, in *making proselytes* to our own peculiar notions and party, which ought to be laid out in making them the servants of God through Christ! God forbid that we should delude ourselves or others by such idle distinctions in matters of conscience, as these which our blessed Redeemer has with so much reason and spirit exposed!—Let us retain the greatest reverence for an *oath*, and not accustom ourselves to trifle with any thing which looks like it. Let us consider *heaven as the throne of God*, and often think of the majesty and glory of that illustrious Being *that sits thereon*; for a sense of his continual presence will form us to a better temper, and engage us with a *righteousness far exceeding that of the Scribes and Pharisees*, to walk before him in all his *commandments and ordinances blameless*.

SECTION CLVIII.

Christ continues his discourse with the Pharisees, reproofing them for their hypocrisy, and threatening them with approaching judgments.
MATT. xxiii. 23, &c.

- 23 **O**UR Lord proceeded in his discourse and said, Wo unto you, ye Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint, and anise, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and fidelity*: these ye ought
24 to have practised, and not to have omitted the other. Ye blind guides, who strain out† a gnat from your drink, and yet can swallow down a camel: Wo unto you, ye Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, but the
25 inner parts are full of rapine and intemperance. Thou blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and of the dish, that
26 the outside of them may be clean also.—Wo unto you, ye Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye resemble whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful without, but within are full of the
27 bones of the dead, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also do indeed outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within you are
28 full of hypocrisy and iniquity.—Wo unto you, ye Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you build up the sepulchres of the
29 prophets, and adorn the monuments of the righteous: And ye say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not
30 have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. So that you bear witness to yourselves, that you are the sons of those that murdered the prophets, and your conduct speaks you to be
31 their genuine offspring. Fill ye up then ‡ the measure of your

* The word *παις* has undoubtedly this signification in many places, as in *Tit.* ii. 10. *Gal.* v. 20. *Rom.* iii. 3.

† An allusion to the custom, where there were swarms of insects, of passing liquor through a strainer that none which might have fallen into it should remain; which grew into a proverb for exactness about little matters.

‡ “And do you then fill up.” D. This change of expression is not only needless, but it makes the sense rather ambiguous. Some render it “And will fill up.” *Cambell* retains the common translation.

- 33 fathers' sins. Ye serpents, ye brood of vipers, how can you es-
 34 cape the damnation of hell? Therefore, behold I send unto you
 prophets and wise men and scribes; and *some* of them ye will kill,
 and crucify; and *some* of them ye will scourge in your syna-
 35 gogues, and persecute from city to city; so that upon you may
seem to come all the righteous blood which has been poured forth
 on the earth from the blood of Abel, that righteous man, to the
 blood of Zechariah * the son of Barachiah, whom ye [*Jews*]
 36 murdered between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto
 you, All these things shall come upon this generation.
 37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and
 stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gath-
 ered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens
 38 together under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house
 39 is left desolate to you. For I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall
 not see me till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the
 name of the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

May we ever remember how necessary it is that our *righteousness* should exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, if we desire to enter into the kingdom of heaven! May our zeal be employed on the great essentials of religion, justice, mercy, and fidelity, and not be laid out merely or chiefly on the circumstantialia of it! May we be concerned about the purity of our hearts, and not merely attend to the decency of our external behaviour! May we be, not like *painted sepulchres*, fair and beautiful without, and full of all uncleanness within; but rather like the vessel laid up before the Lord, whose outside shone with polished gold, while within it was replenished with heavenly manna!

How many, like these *Pharisees*, condemn persecution, and yet themselves are chargeable with the guilt of it! May that never be our character, lest we be *judged out of our own mouths*, and lest we thereby fill up the measure of our iniquities!—Behold the repeated tenderness of our compassionate Redeemer even towards that guilty city that killed the prophets, and stoned the messengers of God! He would with the gentlest and most solicitous care have gathered them, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings. Thus does he still call and invite perishing sinners. Oh that the obstinacy of their own perverse and rebellious wills may not finally withstand all the overtures of his grace; lest eternal desolation be their portion, and they in vain wish for the repetition of those calls which they once so wantonly despised!

* Though learned men have interpreted this of four different persons, I scruple not to explain it of him mentioned 2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21. There is no proof that Zechariah who was one of the minor prophets was murdered. He was indeed the son of Barachiah, but this might here be the officious addition of some early transcriber, who confounded the one with the other. [Or Jehoiadab might also be called Barachiah, as the signification is similar. Henry.]

SECTION CLIX.

Christ applauds the poor widow who cast her two mites into the treasury.

MARK xii. 41, &c. LUKE xxi. 1—4.

AND Jesus, *having ended his discourse to the Scribes and Pharisees,* sat down over-against the treasury ; and he looked up and beheld how the people cast *their money and their gifts* into the treasury. And many rich men cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she cast in there two mites, which make a *Roman farthing*. And he called his disciples to him, and he says to them, Assuredly I say unto you, That this poor widow has cast in more than all they who have thrown into the treasury : for all these threw in of their redundancy into the offerings of God ; but she of her poverty has cast in all that she had, *even all her living*.

REFLECTIONS.

Our Lord Jesus Christ had his eye on those who were bringing *their gifts unto the sacred treasury*. Let us remember his eye is also upon us, to observe in what degree we are ready, on proper occasions, to contribute for the glory of God and the good of mankind ; and in what proportion to the ability which God has given us. Let not the *poorest* be discouraged from doing something for these good purposes, however little they may have it in their power to perform ; since *Christ* may acknowledge the noblest charity in the smallest gift, as *wherever there is a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not*.

Let us imitate the candour of our blessed Redeemer, and be ready to be pleased with little services. The circumstances of mankind are such, that few have it in their power to do great matters frequently for the service of others : but *the desire of a man is his kindness*. The principles and circumstances of an action recommend it more than the appearance it may make ; and a multiplicity of little kind offices, in persons frequently conversant with each other, are the bands of society and friendship. We ought therefore to preserve an habitual tenderness and generosity of mind, and be mutually willing to oblige and to be obliged by them.

To conclude : let us *not despise the poor*, since there are many of them who will in Christ's computation be found eminently *rich in good works* ; many whose *mite will, in the treasury of God*, have the value of a *talent*, and will condemn the sordid parsimony with which many of the rich and great have cast their presents into it ; while what the latter part with *out of their abundance* bears no proportion in the account of God to what the former freely spare *from their necessity*. Happy is it for every truly pious and benevolent mind that it is to give up its final account to him *who searches the heart*, and who is witness to those devout and charitable purposes which will always stretch themselves out beyond the limit of actions, and engage the charitable soul to wish more good than the power and revenues even of kingdoms could effect.

SECTION CLX.

Our Lord foretells the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, and insists on the remoter signs of its approach. MAT. xxiv. 1—14. MARK xiii. 1—13. LUKE xxi. 5—19.

AND Jesus going out *from the treasury* departed from the temple. And his disciples came to him to shew him the buildings of the temple : and some speaking how it was adorned with beautiful stones and costly gifts, one of them says unto him, Master, behold what stones and what edifices are these ! And Jesus replying, said unto them, *As for these things which ye behold with so much admiration ;** all these great buildings *which are the pride of the Jewish nation*, verily I say unto you, The days will come, in which there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be demolished.

And *when he had left the city*, as he sat upon the mount of Olives, over against the temple, the disciples, Peter and James, and John and Andrew, came to him privately, saying, Master, tell us when these things shall happen ? and what *shall be* signs of thy coming, and of the end of the *present* age,† when all these things shall be accomplished. And Jesus answering them, began to say, See to it that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Messiah, and shall deceive many. And the time is now [*almost*‡] come. Go ye not therefore after them. But when ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars, and seditions *among the Jews against the Romans*, see that you be not troubled and terrified, for all these things must first come to pass, but the end is not yet.—Then he *further* said to them, Nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom ; and there shall be famines and pestilences, and great earthquakes in various places, and troubles. There shall also be dreadful sights and great signs from heaven.|| All these things *are only* the beginnings of sorrows. But take ye heed to yourselves ; for before all these things *shall happen*, they shall lay their hands upon you, and persecute you, and shall deliver you up to the councils, and to *the courts* in the synagogues, and into prisons to be scourged and afflicted ; and they shall kill some of you ; and ye shall be hated by all nations, and shall be brought before rulers and kings for my name's sake, for a testimony against them. And it shall turn to you for *an honourable* testimony. And yet the gospel must first be preached among all nations, *subject to the Roman empire*.

* MATTHEW, "Do you not see all—?"

† So *now* may be rendered here, as in various other places. *Matt.* xii. 32. 1 *Cor.* x. 11, &c.—*Josephus*, who was an eye-witness, has transmitted to us a collection of facts which exactly illustrate this prophecy.

‡ The common translation is, "the time draweth near," which seems preferable ; I have therefore inserted the word *almost*, and transposed this clause, as this and the following are both connected in *Luke* xxi. 8. 'Ed.

|| *Josephus* mentions such sights, particularly a comet like a flaming sword over Jerusalem, and the appearance of contending armies in the air. l. vi. c. 5. § 3. See also *Tacitus*. *Hist.* l. v. § 13.

But when they shall bring and deliver you up *to the officers of justice*, settle it in your hearts not to premeditate what answer you shall make, and be not solicitous beforehand what you shall speak ; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye *boldly* ; for it is not you that speak but the Holy Spirit. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to contradict or withstand.

And many shall then be offended *at the gospel*, and shall betray one another, and hate one another. And one brother shall betray another to death, and the father his son ; and children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And *you yourselves shall share in these sufferings*, for you shall be betrayed even by parents, and brethren, and kindred, and friends ; and *some of you shall they cause to be slain*. And ye shall be hated by all *ranks of men* for the sake of my name. But *in the midst of all your sufferings be courageous and cheerful, knowing that you are the care of a peculiar providence*, and not a hair of your head shall perish *unregarded*. In your patience *therefore* possess ye your souls.

And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many *professing Christians* will grow cool. But he that endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the *[known]* world, for a witness to all nations,* and then shall the end of the Jewish state come.

REFLECTIONS.

The whole of this prophecy most evidently shews us, how vain and dangerous it is to trust in external privileges, and to cry out, as these foolish and wretched *Jews* did, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these buildings* ; when of this stately and magnificent structure, within less than half a century after it was finished, *not one stone was left on another* undemolished. So particular a prediction, when compared with the event, must surely confirm our faith in Christ, as the great Prophet which was to come into the world. And we shall see reason to admire the wisdom and goodness of divine Providence in giving us, almost by a miraculous preservation of the author, such a *commentary* on this prophecy as *is* delivered down to us in the works of *Josephus*, the Jewish historian,

* The accomplishment of this extraordinary prophecy is admirably illustrated by *Dr. Arthur Young on Idolatry*, vol. ii. p. 216—234. It appears, from the most credible records, that the *gospel* was preached in Idumea, Syria, and Mesopotamia, by *Jude* ; in Egypt, Marmorica, Mauritania, and other parts of Africa, by *Mark, Simon, and Jude* ; in Ethiopia, by Candace's *eunuch*, and *Matthias* ; in Pontus, Galatia, and the neighbouring parts of Asia, by *Peter* ; in the territories of the seven Asiatic churches, by *John* ; in Parthia, by *Matthew* ; in Scythia, by *Philip* and *Andrew* ; in the northern and western parts of Asia, by *Bartholomew* ; in Persia, by *Simon and Jude* ; in Media, Carmania, and several eastern parts, by *Thomas* ; through the vast tract from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, by *Paul*, as also in Italy, and probably in Spain, Gaul, and Britain : in most of which places Christian churches were planted in less than thirty years after the death of Christ, which was before the destruction of Jerusalem.

which throw a much stronger light upon it than if they had been written by a Christian on purpose to illustrate it.

Let us bless God that our own eyes have not seen such desolations and ruins, such commotions in the natural and moral world, such dissensions in civil life, such persecutions and hatreds amongst the nearest relatives, under the pretence of propagating religion; which, however propagated, is nothing without that *love* which is so often made the first victim to it. Yet too plainly do we see, in one form or another, *iniquity abounding, and the love of many waxing cold*. Let us endeavour to revive on our own hearts a deep and lasting impression of divine things; and remember, whenever we are tempted to let go our integrity, that it is *he alone who endures to the end that shall be saved*.

Whatever our trials are, let us cheerfully confide in the protection of divine Providence; nor let us despair of those continued influences of the blessed Spirit which may animate us to the most difficult services, and support us under the most painful sufferings. Let us therefore *in patience possess our own souls*, and maintain that composure and steadiness of spirit, as those that know how much more valuable it is than any enjoyment which can be taken away, or any temporal interest which can be brought into question.

SECTION CLXI.

Our Lord describes the nearer prognostications of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the extreme severity of those calamities which should then fall on the Jewish nation. MATT. xxiv. 15—28. MARK xiii. 14—23. LUKE xxi. 20—24.

OUR Lord then proceeded to add some more immediate signs of the near approach of this terrible event. And when, said he, you shall see Jerusalem compassed with the Roman armies, and the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet (*Ch. ix. 27.*) standing where it ought not, in an holy place: *when the standards which bear the detestable images of their idols are planted on holy ground (Jerusalem and its environs)* then let them that are in Judea flee*, and let them that are in the midst of it (*where Jerusalem stands*) depart immediately out of it; and let not them that are in the adjacent countries enter into it. And let not him that is on the top of the house go down into the house, nor enter into it to take any thing out of his house†, and let not him that is at work in the field go back to take his clothes: for these are days of vengeance, that all things

* It is remarkable, that by the special providence of God, after the Romans under Cestius Gallus made their first advance towards Jerusalem, they suddenly withdrew again, in a most unexpected, and indeed impolitic, manner; at which *Josephus* testifies his surprise, since the city might then have been easily taken. By this means they gave as it were a signal to the Christians to retire; which, in regard to this admonition, they did, some to Pella, and others to mount Libanus, and thereby preserved their lives.

† See on *Luke* xvii. 31. § 128.—These are strong expressions to urge the speediest retreat.

which are written may be fulfilled. But wo to them *more especially* that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days. And pray that your flight may not be in winter, nor on a sabbath-day; [*There will be need of every advantage for escaping to a distance*] for in those days there shall be *a scene of great tribulation and distress* in the land of Judea, and of wrath from heaven upon this people, such as the like has not been known from the beginning of the creation which God has made, unto this time, nor ever shall be; *as no people ever have been, nor ever shall be guilty of such aggravated crimes.* And therefore they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and those that escape the general carnage shall be carried away captives into all nations*. And Jerusalem itself shall be trampled down by the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, and they shall be visited and punished. And during the wars which are to bring on this sad catastrophe, except the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh could be saved: *the whole nation would be exterminated.* But for the elect's sake, those whom he has chosen to partake the blessings of his gospel, those days shall be shortened. (Rom. xi. 26.) And if any one shall then say unto you, Behold the Messiah is here, or behold he is there, do not believe it. For false Messiahs and false prophets shall arise, and shall pretend to shew great signs and prodigies, so as if it were possible, to deceive the very elect. But be upon your guard, for behold I have foretold you all these things. Therefore if they shall say unto you, respecting the Messiah, He is in the wilderness, gathering his forces, do not go forth to join them; or, Behold he is in the secret apartments of some friend, do not believe it. For as the lightning breaks forth from the east, and shines in a moment even to the west, so sudden and conspicuous also shall the coming of the Son of man be. And very extensive also will be the desolation; for wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together†.

REFLECTIONS.

If our Lord urges his disciples, with such speedy and solicitous haste, to flee from the sword of God's temporal judgments, how much greater diligence should we give to flee from the wrath to come! What are any of the little interests of life, that out of regard to them we should be willing to continue one moment longer exposed to a danger which may sink us into everlasting perdition and despair! We have here a lively description of that aggravated ruin which was brought upon the Jews for neglecting Christ; even great tribulation, such as had never, from the very beginning of the world, fallen upon any other nation, nor shall ever be equalled. Thus was his blood upon them, and their children. May we never know what it is to have this blood crying against us for trampling it under foot as an unholy thing!

* It appears from Josephus, that eleven hundred thousand were destroyed in this war; and near an hundred thousand taken prisoners, and sold for slaves at the vilest prices.

† This was fulfilled in the appearance of those impostors during the siege of Jerusalem, of whom Josephus has given an account. l. vi. c. 5. § 2.

‡ See on Luke xvii. 37. § 128.

For surely to the Jews, who *thus rejected the counsel of God against themselves*, all these things which they suffered were but *the beginning of sorrows*; and the famine and sedition, pestilence and slaughter, by which so many thousands perished, served only to consign them over to infinitely more terrible *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish*, which will at last fall on every soul of man that doth evil, whether Jew or Gentile.

These unhappy creatures eagerly listened to the very name of a Messiah, by whomsoever it was assumed; while they rejected him whom God had sent them, and who had so long, and with so much importunity, been renewing to them the offers of life and salvation. May none of us ever know the sad impatience with which condemned sinners will wish, and wish in vain, for those overtures and messages of grace which they now despise! In that sense, *wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together*: wherever there is the like unbelief and impenitence, there will be in its degree the like ruin. Christ has graciously *told us these things before*: may we humbly attend to the warning, that none of this terror and destruction may ever come upon us!

SECTION CLXII.

Christ describes the destruction of the Jewish state by strong figures, literally suiting the day of judgment; to the mention of which he proceeds. MATT. XXIV. 29—36. MARK XIII. 24—32. LUKE XXI. 25—33.

OUR Lord proceeded in his awful prediction, saying, And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; *eclipses, comets, and surprising meteors*; and on the earth *there shall be* anguish and distress of nations, the sea and the waves thereof roaring, while men shall be *almost* expiring with fear, and expectation of those things which are coming upon the land.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken*. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven *at the last day*. And all the tribes of the land shall then mourn; and they shall see the Son of man coming *as it were* in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he shall then send forth his messengers † with the great sound of his gospel, as of a trumpet, and

* That is, according to the sublimity of prophetic language, the whole civil and ecclesiastical constitution of the nation shall be dissolved. Compare *Is. xiii. 10. xxxiv. 4, 10. Joel ii. 30, 31. Amos viii. 9, &c.* These events are spoken of as *signs* of Christ's second coming; that is, the circumstances of the one were similar to those of the other, and were calculated to remind men of them.

† This passage has been much obscured by rendering the word *ἄγγελοι*, angels. It often signifies *messengers*, and sometimes preachers of the gospel; who were to unite God's chosen people in one society, under Christ. *Eph. i. 10.*

they shall assemble his elect from the four winds, *even from one end of the heavens to the other**, and multitudes of all nations shall obey the summons. And when these things begin to come to pass, look upwards, and lift up your heads *with joy*, for your redemption draws nigh; for many of you will be safely brought home to the haven of eternal peace, before these storms are ended, and the rest will not long survive them.

And, to illustrate what he said, he spake to them a parable: Behold now, and learn a parable from the fig-tree, and all the other trees that drop their leaves in the winter: When [their] branch is now become tender, and they shoot forth their young leaves, you see and know of your own-selves that summer is now near at hand. So likewise you, when you shall see all these things come to pass, may assuredly know the kingdom of God is just at hand, even at the doors: that the desolation which I have spoken of is coming upon Jerusalem, and that the gospel is about to be propagated in the world. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But though [I have foretold when] Jerusalem shall be destroyed, yet of THAT DAY and hour, that season which is appointed for the dissolution and judgment of the world, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son of man himself, but my Father only.

- REFLECTIONS.

Let us now raise our contemplations to that awful day when all that was figuratively spoken of the destruction of Jerusalem shall be literally accomplished; and let us consider our own intimate concern in it. Where will our hope and comfort, our light, and our safety be, when the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, when the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken? Where, indeed, unless the almighty God, the everlasting Jehovah, by whose voice they were created, and by whose hand they shall be dashed in pieces again, shall condescend to be our light, and our salvation? And if he indeed be so, then we may lift up our heads with joy; as knowing that our complete redemption draweth nigh, even that long-expected day which, with all its solemn horrors, has still been the brightest object of our faith and our hopes.

Then shall the Son of man indeed come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, and send his angels to summon his elect, and to assemble them from one end of heaven to the other; for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. May we hear the summons with joy, and stand in our lot among his chosen ones! What though the day and season be unknown? It is enough for us that we know that all these interposing days and years, be they ever so numerous, will at length be past; for the promise of the great Redeemer is our security, and he will hasten it in its time. These visible heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the earth shall be removed out of its place; but

* MARK, "From the uttermost parts of the earth, to the uttermost part of heaven."

the sure word of his promise shall never pass away; even that promise which is engaged for the salvation of his people. Let us often review it; let us firmly realize it to our souls, and, *seeing we look for such things*, let us seriously consider, *what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness.*

SECTION CLXIII.

Our Lord, by the suddenness of his appearance, urges a constant watchfulness, repeating what he had formerly said on that subject. MAT. xxiv. 37, &c. MARK xiii. 33, &c. LUKE xxi. 34—36.

BUT uncertain as the time of the final judgment may be, of this I will in general inform you that, as in the days of Noah, the deluge was sudden and unexpected, so also shall the Son of man be. For as in the days which were before the universal deluge, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, *thinking of nothing but present indulgence*, until the very day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not nor suspected any approaching evil, till the deluge came and bare them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then (*as was before observed with relation to the destruction of your country*) two men shall be together in the field, the one shall be seized and the other dismissed. Two women shall be grinding at the same mill; the one shall be seized and the other dismissed; *the like may be said with respect to the final judgment.** And therefore take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overladen by gluttony and drunkenness, and secular cares, and by this means that day should come unexpectedly upon you. For it shall come on *the greatest part of all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth as a snare upon a thoughtless bird*. Therefore watch ye, take heed, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man; for you know not at what hour your Lord does come.—But this you know, that if the master of the house *that has been plundered* had known in what watch of the night the thief would have come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broke open. Therefore be ye also ready; for at an hour when you think not of it, the Son of man cometh.

For the Son of man is, in this respect, as a man travelling to a distant country, who, as he was leaving his house, gave authority to his head servants to oversee the rest, and assigned to every man his proper work, and commanded the porter to watch.—Who now do you suppose is the faithful and prudent servant, whom his Lord has appointed ruler over

* See Luke xvii. 35, 36.—I humbly conceive that the grand transition [from the destruction of Jerusalem to the general judgment] about which commentators are so divided, and so generally mistaken, is made precisely after these two verses, not a word peculiar to the former being mentioned afterwards.—[Query, whether it be not more naturally understood to be made at the close of the foregoing section?]

† MARK, "When the time is."

his household, to give them *their food in due season*? *You, my apostles, may easily apply the character to yourselves.* Happy indeed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find thus employed. Verrily I say unto you, that he will make him ruler of all his estate. But *he that proves unfaithful shall be severely punished*: and if that wicked servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delays his coming, and shall begin to beat his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he does not expect him, and in an hour when he is not aware, and *scourge him so as to cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with hypocrites*: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Watch ye therefore *continually*, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh; *whether in the evening-watch, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning, lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.* And what I say to you, I say to all, Watch.

REFLECTIONS.

What slothful hearts must we have if these repeated admonitions do not awaken us; even *line upon line, and precept upon precept*? The patience of God is waiting upon us, as it did on the old world, *while the ark was preparing*: May we take warning, and seek shelter before the door be shut against us! Let us therefore *take heed*, lest sensuality and *secular cares overcharge and depress our hearts*, and amuse us with vain delusions, till sudden and unavoidable destruction come upon us. We are by profession the domestics of Christ. Let us attend to the offices he has assigned us, though he seem at a distance. Let us diligently *wait his coming*, at whatever season. Let his ministers especially wait it; and be solicitous, that they may be *found so doing*, conducting themselves like *wise stewards of the mysteries of God*, dispensing to every one his portion of *food in due season*. Then will our account be honourable, and our reward glorious.

May God deliver us from the guilt and condemnation of the cruel, the imperious, and the luxurious servant, who *began to beat his fellows, and to eat and drink with the drunken*; since we are expressly told his dreadful doom! Justly does our Lord declare that to such a one he will *appoint a portion with hypocrites*, terrible as their portion must be; for no hypocrisy can be baser than to call ourselves the servants and ministers of Christ, while we are the slaves of ambition, avarice, and intemperance. Wherever such are found, under whatever mask and form, may he reform them by his grace, or disarm them of that power and influence which they continually abuse to his dishonour, and to their own aggravated damnation! Let us in the mean time be *exhorting each other daily, while it is called to-day, lest any by insensible degrees, be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*; and let us always remember that every exhortation which we give to others, returns with redoubled weight upon ourselves.

SECTION CLXIV.

Christ enforces his exhortation to watchfulness by the parable of the ten virgins. MATT. XXV. 1—12.

OUR Lord, to impress on the minds of his hearers a concern about the awful day of judgment, represented it by this parable :
 1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be like the case of ten virgins,
 invited to a marriage-feast,* who took their lamps, and went out to
 2 meet the bridegroom. And five of them were prudent persons,
 3 and five were foolish. They that were foolish, when they took
 4 their lamps did not take any oil with them. Whereas the prudent
 5 took oil in their vessels, with their lamps. But while the bride-
 groom delayed his coming, as they were sitting to wait for him, they
 6 all slumbered and fell asleep. And in the middle of the night,
 there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom is coming, go ye
 7 out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and dressed their
 8 lamps. And the foolish said to the prudent, Give us some of your
 9 oil, for our lamps are gone out. But the prudent replied, *We can-*
not do that, lest there be not enough for us and you ; but rather go
 10 ye to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went
 to buy, the bridegroom came ; and those that were ready went in
 11 with him to the marriage-feast, and the door was shut.—And some
 time after, the other virgins also came, knocking at the door, say-
 12 ing, Sir, Sir, open to us. But he answered saying, Truly, I
 know you not.—*And such will be your case, if you content yourselves*
with a mere empty profession of religion, and sink into a careless, negli-
 13 *gent conduct.* Therefore watch continually, not presuming on pre-
 parations to be made hereafter, for ye know neither the day nor the
 hour in which the Son of man cometh.†

REFLECTIONS.

Let us apply our hearts to the obvious instructions which this well-known parable so naturally suggests. We are under a religious profession : our lamps are in our hands ; and we go forth as those that expect to meet Christ ; as those that desire and hope to be admitted to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. But, alas, how few are there that are truly prepared for such a blessedness ! Would to God there were reason to hope that the Christian church were so equally divided, that five of ten in it had the oil of divine grace in their hearts, to render them burning and shining lights !

* Such feasts used to be celebrated in the night. Various Jewish customs on these occasions are here alluded to.

† This last clause, *in which the Son of man cometh*, is not in many ancient MSS. or versions, nor is it quoted by the fathers. But it seems well supplied : as are the words *the Son of man* in the beginning of the next verse, rather than *the kingdom of heaven* ; neither of which is in the Greek, which begins, *Like a man travelling.* ED.

Let even such as have it be upon their guard; for our Lord intimates that *the wise* as well as *the foolish virgins* are too apt to *slumber and sleep*, and carelessly to intermit that *watch* which they ought constantly to maintain. There may be, at an unexpected time, a *midnight cry*. Happy the souls that can hear it with pleasure; being not only habitually but actually *ready* to obey the summons! Happy they that have their *loins girded*, and their *lamps burning*!

The foolish virgins saw their error too late: they applied to *the wise*; but their application was vain. And as vain will the hope of those be who trust to the intercession of departed saints, or any supposed redundancy of merit in them, while they are themselves strangers to a holy temper and life. In vain will they cry, *Lord, Lord, open to us*. *The door of mercy* will be *shut* for ever, and the *workers of iniquity* utterly disowned. The day of grace has its limits; and for those that have trifled it away there remaineth nothing *but the blackness of darkness for ever*!

SECTION CLXV.

The parable of the talents repeated in a different form. MATT. XXV. 14—30.

JESUS further urges diligence in preparing for his coming, by another parable. For [the Son of man will be] at his final appearing, as a man who, going a journey, called his servants and delivered his effects to them. And to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one: to every man according to his capacity; and he immediately went away. And he who had received the five talents, went and traded with them, and produced five talents more. And in like manner he who had received the two, he also gained two more. But he that had received only one, went away and digged in the earth, and hid his master's money. After some considerable time the master of those servants comes, and makes up his accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came and brought other five talents; saying, Sir, thou didst deliver to me five talents, behold I have gained to them five talents more. And his master said to him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things; I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy master, and share in the banquet prepared for my friends on my return. He also who had received the two talents came and said, Sir, thou didst deliver to me two talents, behold I have gained two other talents to them. His master said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou has been faithful in a few things; I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy master.—Then he also who had received the one talent came and said, Sir, I knew thee, that thou art a severe man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering whence thou hast not scattered: and being terrified, I went away and hid thy talent in the earth: behold there thou hast thine own. His master answering said

unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant! Thou kenwest [didst thou?] that I reap where I did not sow, and gather whence
 27 I had not scattered. Therefore thou shouldst have put my money to the bankers, and when I came I might have received mine own
 28 with interest.—Take ye therefore the talent from him, and give
 29 it to him that has ten talents. For to every one that hath, it shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath
 30 not *improved it*, even what he hath shall be taken away. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into the darkness which is without: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

REFLECTIONS.

What can excite us to a becoming care and activity in the duties of life, if we are deaf to those various and important motives which this excellent parable suggests? We have each of us received our *talents*, whether *five*, or *two*, or *one*; and if we be *faithful*, it matters not much under which of these classes we fall. Our acceptance and reward will be proportionable to our diligence; nor will any be blamed because he has not received five, though many will be condemned for neglecting one. Yet a little while, and our *Lord comes to reckon with us*, and even now his eye is continually upon us. Let us ask our own souls, with what temper, with what courage, with what cheerfulness, shall we appear before him? Let us think of that appearance with awe, but not with terror. Away with every unjust thought and reasoning (with whatever artifice it be excused, with whatever honourable name it be dignified) that would represent him as a *rigorous and severe Master*, and produce a servile dread, which would cut the sinews of industry, and sink the soul into a sullen, negligent despair.

Whatever our particular snares in life may be, let us think of the doom of the *slothful servant*, to awaken our souls, and to deter us from every degree of unfaithfulness. And, on the other hand, let us often reflect on that unutterable transport which will overflow the breast of every real Christian, when his gracious Master shall condescend, in so honourable a manner, to commemorate his honest, though feeble, attempts of service; and shall say, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!* May that joy be the great object of our hopes and pursuits! and may our daily care in the improvement of every talent lodged in our hands be a token to us that it will be sure and great!

SECTION CLXVI.

Christ concludes this discourse with an affecting description of the last judgment. MATT. XXV. 31, &c.

31 **W**HEN the Son of man shall come in his glory [at the last
 32 day] and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon his glorious throne. And all the nations shall be assembled before him; and he shall separate them from each other as a shep-

- 33 herd separates the sheep from the goats: And he shall set the
 34 sheep at his right-hand, but the goats on *his* left. Then the king
 shall say to them on his right-hand, Come, ye blessed of my Fa-
 ther, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of
 35 the world: For I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was
 thirsty, and ye caused me to drink; I was a stranger, and ye took
 36 me in. *I was* naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye
 looked after me; I was in prison, and ye came to *relieve* me.
 37 Then shall the righteous answer him and say, Lord, did we *ever*
 see thee hungry, and fed *thee*? or thirsty and caused *thee* to drink?
 38 or when did we see thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or when
 39 did we see thee sick, or in prison, and came to thee *for thy re-*
 40 *lief*? And the king answering, shall say unto them, Verily I say
 unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* unto one of the least of these my
 brethren, ye did *it* to me.
 41 Then he shall say also to them on the left-hand, Depart from me,
 ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his an-
 42 gels; for I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was
 43 thirsty, and ye did not give me to drink; I was a stranger, and
 ye did not take me in; I was naked, and ye did not clothe me;
 44 sick and in prison, and ye did not look after me.—Then shall they
 also answer and say unto him, Lord, when did we *ever* see thee
 hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison,
 45 and did not minister to thee? Then shall he answer them saying,
 Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the
 least of these, ye did *it* not to me*.
 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the
 righteous into everlasting life.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us now behold, with an attentive eye and a solicitous heart, *the end of all the living*; that awful scene, in which the various dispensations of God to mankind shall terminate in the solemn day, *when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and sit on his magnificent throne. All nations and people shall be assembled before him, and we must make up a part of the assembly. The sheep and the goats must then be separated*: and, O my soul, amongst which wilt thou then be numbered? Is there an enquiry, is there a care, of greater, of equal, of comparable importance?

Let us view the sentence we must shortly hear, as he who will himself pronounce it has been pleased to give us a copy of it.—Can we conceive any thing more dreadful than that which shall be passed on *those on the left hand*? To be driven from the presence of Christ as *accursed*, and to be consigned over to a devouring *fire*! and this not only to the tortures of a moment, or an hour (as in some painful

* Every [attentive] reader will observe, with what majesty and grandeur our Lord speaks of himself in this section; which is one of the noblest instances of the true sublime that I have any where read: and indeed few passages, even in the sacred writings, seem to equal it. We can hardly read it without imagining ourselves before the awful tribunal it describes.

executions that have been known here) but to *everlasting fire*, yea, to fire prepared for the devil and his angels, where they will be perpetual companions, and perpetual tormentors! Should not the thought that he is in danger, in hourly danger, of being sealed up under this sentence, awaken the most stupid sinner, and engage him eagerly to cry out, *What shall I do to be saved!*—And on whom is this sentence passed? Let us attentively observe it! Not merely on the most gross and abandoned sinners; but on those who have lived in an habitual neglect of their duty: not merely on those who have ravaged and persecuted the saints (though surely *their furnace will be heated seven times hotter than that of others*) but even on those who have neglected to relieve them.

On the other hand, let us seriously reflect what it will be to be owned by Christ before the assembled world; and to hear him saying, with a sweet smile, and with a voice of harmony and love, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* How infinite is the love that prepared that kingdom for us before we had a being! How rich the blood that purchased it! How overflowing the grace that bestows it on such mean, such undeserving creatures! *Bless the Lord, O our souls*, in the prospect of it! *Let men curse*, O Lord, if thou wilt thus bless. Let them load our names with infamy if thou wilt adorn them with such glory: let all the kingdoms of the earth, and all the pomp of them, be despised and trampled under foot, when offered as an equivalent for this infinitely more glorious kingdom.

Let us attentively observe the character of those who are to receive it. They are the useful and the benevolent souls: such as have loved the Lord Jesus Christ, not only in his name, and ordinances, and promises, but have loved him in his laws, and in his PEOPLE too; and have known him in those humble forms in which he has been pleased, as it were by proxy, to appear among us. *I was hungry, and ye fed me; thirsty, and ye gave me drink, &c. for, inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.* Amazing words! that the meanest saint should be owned by the King of glory as one of his brethren! Irresistible argument to those that do indeed believe these words, to stir them up to abound in every good word and work! Under this impression, methinks, instead of hiding ourselves from those who should be to us as our own flesh by virtue of our common union to him, we should not only hearken to their entreaties, but even search them out in those corners to which modest want may sometimes retire, and cast about in our thoughts how we may secure any happy opportunity of relieving some poor saint, for their sakes, and for their Master's, and even for our own.

What if Christ came to us in person as a poor helpless stranger? What if we saw him destitute of food and raiment, or in want of any other necessities of life? Should we not contend for it as an honour, which of us should receive him into our houses? which of us should entertain him at our table? which of us should even strip ourselves of our clothing to give it to him? And yet he tells us that he is, in effect, with us in his poor members; and we invent a thousand cold ex-

cuses for neglecting to assist him, and send our compassionate Saviour away empty. Is this the temper of a *Christian*? Is this the temper in which we should wish to be found at the judgment-day?

But we know not Christ in this disguise. Neither did these unhappy creatures *on the left hand* know him: they are surprised to be told of such a thing; and yet are represented as perishing for it. Away therefore with all those religious hopes (vainly so called) which leave the heart hardened, and the hand contracted from good works! *If we shut up the bowels of compassion from our brethren, how dwelleth the love of God in us?* Or to what doth the love of Christ constrain us, if it be not to the exercise of gratitude to him, and the offices of cheerful and active friendship to those whom he now owns as *his brethren*, and whom he will not be ashamed to call so in the midst of his highest triumph? Blessed Jesus, how munificent art thou! And what a fund of charity didst thou lay up in the very words which are now before us! In all ages since they were spoken, how many hungry hast thou fed, how many naked hast thou clothed, how many calamitous creatures hast thou relieved by them! May they be written deep in our hearts, that the joy with which we shall finally meet thee may be increased by the happy effect of this day's meditation.

SECTION CLXVII.

The Jewish rulers consult how they might take Christ, and Judas agrees to deliver him into their hands. MATT. xxvi. 1—5, 14—16. MARK xiv. 1, 2, 10, 11. LUKE xxi. 37, &c. xxii. 1—6.

THUS our Lord ended his discourses on the third day of the week in which he suffered; and he was constantly teaching by day in the temple, and at night he went out of the city, and lodged at the mount called the mount of olives. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, that they might hear him. Now the feast of unleavened bread, which was called the passover, drew near, and was *within two days after*.* And it came to pass that when Jesus had finished all these discourses, he said to his disciples, Ye know that after two days the passover cometh; and the Son of man is then to be betrayed to be crucified.

Then the chief priests and the scribes and the elders of the people, assembled together, at the palace of the high-priest, who was called Caiaphas. And they consulted how they might take Jesus by artifice, and put him to death as soon as possible. But some of them were rather for delaying it, and they said, Not at the feast, lest there should be a tumult among the people; for they feared the people: but others pushed the matter on with greater forwardness and zeal.

* I apprehend that the preceding discourses (from § cli.) were delivered on the *Tuesday*; and he probably uttered the following words that evening, which was just two days before the paschal lamb was eaten. I do not find that any of the transactions of the *Wednesday* are recorded, besides the general account given above.

Then Satan entered into Judas, who was also called Iscariot, and was one of the number of the twelve *apostles*. And he went away and conversed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. And he said, What are you willing to give me? and I will deliver him to you. And when they heard it, they were glad of *such an offer*; and readily promised to give him money as a reward; and at last they agreed with him for thirty pieces of silver,* which was the price to be paid for a slave who had been slain. And he promised to [fulfil his engagement;] and accordingly from that time, sought opportunity to betray him unto them, in the absence of the multitude.

REFLECTIONS.

We see with what unremitting vigour the great *Author and Finisher of our faith*, pressed forward towards the mark, and how he quickened his pace, as he saw the day approaching; spending in devotion the greatest part of the night, which succeeded to his most laborious days, and resuming his work early in the morning! How much happier were his disciples in these early lectures than the slumbers of the morning could have made them on their beds! Let us not scruple to deny ourselves the indulgence of unnecessary sleep, that we may come morning after morning to place ourselves at his feet, and lose no opportunity of receiving the instructions of his word, and seeking those of his Spirit.

But while his gracious heart was thus intent on doing good, the chief priests and rulers of the people were no less intent on mischief and murder. They took counsel together how they might put him to death: They set upon his head the price of a slave, and find an apostle base enough to accept it. Blush, O ye heavens, to have been witness to this; and be ashamed, O earth, to have supported so infamous a creature! Yet this was the man who but a few days before was the foremost to appear as an advocate for the poor, and to censure the pious zeal of *Mary*, which our Lord vindicated and applauded. Let the fatal proofs of his covetous disposition, instigated by *Satan*, be marked with abhorrence and terror; and if we see this base principle harboured in the breasts of those who call themselves the disciples and ministers of Christ, let us not wonder if by God's righteous judgment they are given up to those excesses of it which bring upon them lasting infamy and endless perdition.

* About 3*l*. 15*s*. See *Exod.* xxi. 32. As they proposed it to express their contempt of Jesus, so God permitted Judas, covetous as he was, to acquiesce in that mean and trifling sum (though he might easily have raised it higher) that thus the prophecy might be fulfilled. *Zech.* xi. 12, 13. A goodly price that he was prized at of them.

SECTION CLXVIII.

Christ, having directed his disciples where to prepare the passover, comes to Jerusalem and celebrates it with them. MATT. XXVI. 17—20. MARK XIV. 12—17. LUKE XXII. 7—18. JOHN XIII. 1.

NOW the first day of unleavened bread came, in which the passover (or the paschal lamb) must be killed. And he sent two of his disciples, Peter and John, to Jerusalem, and said, Go and prepare the passover for us, that we may eat it together. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou have us go, and prepare for thy eating the passover? And he said unto them, Go into the city to such a one as I will point out to you: Behold as soon as you are entered into the city, a man will meet you, carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he enters,* and say to the master of the family, The Teacher says to thee, My time is near, I will celebrate the passover at thy house:† where is the dining-room, where I may eat the passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room, furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. And his two disciples went out, and came into the city, and found the man, as he had said to them; and they did as Jesus had appointed them, and made the passover ready. And in the evening, when the hour was come, he came and sat down with the twelve apostles.

Now before he began to eat the feast of the passover, as Jesus knew that his hour was come, when he should depart from this world to the Father, he ordered every circumstance of his last interview with his disciples, so as to manifest, that having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them to the end. And he said to them, I have most earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you, That I will not eat of it any more, till it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God; or till the institutions of the gospel shall have perfected those of the law.—And having received the cup (with which it was usual to begin the feast) he gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I say unto you, That I will not drink any more of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God come; and that spiritual redemption, which is typified by this ordinance, shall be fulfilled.

REFLECTIONS.

We may well assure ourselves, that the same divine penetration and prophetic discernment which enabled the blessed Jesus thus circumstantially to foretell to his disciples those most contingent occurrences which were to determine the place where they should prepare the passover, would also open to him a prospect of all that was to follow. All the scenes that were to be passed through on this fatal night, and the succeeding black and bloody day, were, no doubt, attentively viewed: the agony of the garden, the traitorous kiss of Judas, the cowardly

* MARK, "Whosoever he goes in you shall say."

† The owner of this house might be a person who was, in his heart at least, a disciple of Christ.

flight of all the other apostles, the insults of his seemingly victorious and successful enemies, the clamorous accusations, the insolent buffetings, the scourges, the thorns, the nails, the cross, and all that he was to endure upon it from the hand of God and men. Yet behold, with all these in his view, he goes on with a holy alacrity, and this *sun of righteousness rejoiceth as a champion to run his race!* Yea, when he is sitting down to the paschal supper (though therein was exhibited, in a most lively emblem, the bitterness of his own sufferings) he utters these gracious and emphatical words, *With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.*

So justly might it be said of him, as we see it is, that *having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them to the end.* O blessed Jesus, may the ardour, the courage, and the permanency of our love to thee, bear at least some little proportion to that wherewith thou hast condescended to love us! May we long, from time to time, to celebrate with thee that *Christian passover* which thou hast ordained to succeed the Jewish, as the memorial of thy sacrifice! Yea, may we long for the last solemnity of this kind, which will ere long come, after which *we shall no more drink with thee of the fruit of the vine, till it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God!* In the mean time may we be cheered with *thy love*, which is indeed far *better than wine*; and, thus supported with those reviving cordials which thy gospel administers, may we *keep ourselves in the love of God, and in the patient expectation of thy final, glorious, and welcome appearance!*

SECTION CLXIX.

Christ rebukes the ambition of his disciples, by washing their feet, and adds several admonitions to humility. JOHN XIII. 2—17.

- 2 **N**OW supper being come*, and the antepast or introduction to it being over; in the interval between that and the serving up the paschal lamb, there was a contention among them, which of
 3 them should be accounted the greatest. And upon this, though Jesus knew that the father had given all things into his hands, and that as he came forth from God, he was returning to God; he
 4 was willing to give his disciples an example of humility before his
 5 passion. With this design he riseth from supper; and lays aside
 6 his upper-garments, and taking a towel, tied it round him; And then pouring water into an ewer, he began to wash the feet of his
 7 disciples, and to wipe them with the linen cloth with which he was girded.—Then when he comes to Simon Peter, to do the like for him, Peter says to him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said to him, Thou knowest not now the design of what

* In this sense the word is used, *John xxi. 4. Acts xii. 18, &c.* The rest of this verse (which is a parenthesis) is transposed. And the words following, are introduced here from *Luke xxii. 24.* respecting the contention between the disciples, which certainly must have taken place previous to Christ's lesson on humility. [The author, in a long note, gives sufficient reasons for such a transposition.]

- I am doing, but thou shalt know hereafter; *as I shall presently explain this action, and many other things.* Peter said to him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I do not wash thee, thou hast no portion with me. Simon Peter, *struck with so awful an admonition,* says to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus says *further* to him, He that has *just* been bathing, needs only to wash his feet, and is entirely clean; and, *in this sense,* you are clean; but not all. For he knew who would betray him; therefore he said, You are not all clean. When therefore he had washed their feet, and had taken his *upper* garments, he sat down *at the table* again, and said to them, Do you know *the design* of what I have been doing to you?—*He then proceeded to explain this action, [and to apply the reproof intended by it.]*
- 25* And he said to them, *as formerly:* The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and they that exercise authority upon them have the title of benefactors. But you *shall* not do thus: but let him who is eldest among you be as the youngest, and he that presides, *let him be* as a servant. For which is greater, he that sits at the table, or he that waits? Is not he that sits at the table? But I am among you as one that waits.
- 13 You call me Teacher and Lord; and you say well; for *so* I am. 14 If therefore I *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you 15 also ought to wash one another's feet†. For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, you also should do *to one another.* Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord, nor the messenger greater than he that sent him. 17 If you know these things, you are happy if you practise them.

REFLECTIONS.

What a mournful reflection is it that corrupt nature should still prevail so far, even in the hearts of such pious men as the apostles in the main were, that after so long a converse with Christ, they should still be so unlike him, and bring their eager contentions about *superiority*, in a state of temporal grandeur they were never to see, into the last hours they spent with their Master, and even to one of the most holy and solemn ordinances of religion! Such are the vain dreams of ambition, and with such empty shadows does it amuse the deluded mind. But let us turn our eyes to him whom we justly call our Teacher and our Lord; for surely, if any thing can effect a cure, it must be actions and words like these. The great *Heir of all things*, invested with universal dominion, and just returning to his heavenly Father to undertake the administration of it; in what a habit, in what an attitude, do we see him! Whom would a stranger have taken for the lowest of the company, but him who was high over all created nature? Blessed Jesus, it was not so much any personal attachment to these thy servants, as a regard to the edification of thy whole church, which engaged thee to this astonishing action; that all thy ministers,

* This and the two following verses are from *Luke* xxii.

† This was used proverbially for performing the lowest offices. 1 *Sam.* xxv. 41.

that all thy people, in conformity to thy example, might learn a readiness to *serve each other in love!*

But why are we so slow to receive this lesson? And why is our practice often so contrary to it? Surely to cleanse us from these dregs of pride and carnality we need in a spiritual sense to be *washed* by him. Let us gladly submit to that washing, if we desire to secure *any part in him*. Which of us in this view may not see reason to cry out with *Peter, Lord, not our feet only, but also our hands and our head?* May our whole nature be thus purified! and, warmly emulous of conforming to so bright an example, may we ever be maintaining a watchfulness over our own spirits; correcting the first appearances of irregularity, and washing away every lightest stain which our feet may contract in this various journey! So shall we be *great* in the sight and favour of our Master; and, numbering ourselves among the *least* of his servants, shall be distinguished by peculiar honours, in proportion to the degree in which we think ourselves most unworthy of them.

SECTION CLXX.

Christ declares that one of his apostles should betray him, and marks out Judas as the person, who upon this retires. MATT. xxvi. 21—25. MARK xiv. 18—21. LUKE xxii. 21—23, 28—30. JOHN xiii. 2, 18—30.

THEN Jesus went on, as he was eating the *passover*, to instruct, admonish, and comfort his disciples; and said, Ye are they who have continued with me in my trials; and by a covenant * I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father has appointed unto me: That you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. *But* I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen; but that the scripture may be fulfilled, which says (*Psal. xli. 9.*) “He that eateth bread with me, hath *“lift up his heel against me.”* I tell you now, before it comes to pass, that when it comes, you may believe that I am *He*. *And whatsoever therefore I shall suffer, let not your zeal in my cause be lessened; for as I formerly declared, so now I most assuredly say unto you, Whoever entertains any of my messengers, entertains me; and whoever entertains me, entertains him that sent me.*

When Jesus had thus said (the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray him) he was troubled in spirit; and as they sat, and were eating the *paschal supper*; Jesus testified and said; Verily, verily, I say unto you, That one of you who is eating with me will betray me: behold the hand of him that betrayeth me is *now* with me on the table.—Then the disciples were exceedingly grieved, and looked on each other, doubting of whom he spake: and they began to enquire among themselves, which

* The word *διαθήκεν* properly signifies, to covenant, or to bestow in virtue of a covenant.

of them it could be that was about to do this thing; and began every one of them to say to him, one by one, Lord is it I?

Now one of his disciples whom Jesus loved, *and honoured, with the most intimate friendship, being next him at the table, on his right hand,* was reclining *r* against the bosom of Jesus. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it might be of whom he spake. He then *who was reclining r* at the breast of Jesus*, (*viz. John*) said to him, Lord who is it? Jesus answered *with a low voice*, It is he to whom I shall give this sop†, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, *the son of Simon, putting it towards him in the dish. Upon which Judas put forth his hand to take it; and others continuing the same question to Jesus, he* answered and said to them‡, He that *now* dippeth his hand with me in the dish, this very person shall betray me. The Son of man is indeed going to suffer, as it is written, and determined concerning him; but wo to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed: it had been well for that man, if he had never been born. Then Judas *who* betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said to him, Thou hast said; *thou art the very person.*

And after *he had received the sop*, Satan entered into him. Then Jesus said to him, What you do, do quickly. But no man at the table knew, for what purpose he spake this to him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the purse, that *it was as if* Jesus had said to him, Buy those other things, which we shall need for the feast; or that he should give something to the poor. He therefore, having received the sop, immediately went out: and it was night; *the time appointed to meet those, who were consulting the death of Jesus.*

REFLECTIONS.

Who would not gladly *continue with Christ* in the strictest fidelity, amidst all the trials which can arise, when he observes how liberally he repays his servants, and how graciously he seems to relish his own honours the more, in proportion to the degree in which those honours are shared with them; *appointing* them a glorious kingdom, and erecting *thrones* for each of them? And surely, though the apostles of the Lamb are to have their peculiar dignity in the great day of his triumph, there is a sense in which he will perform *to every one that overcometh*, that yet more condescending promise, *I will grant him to sit down with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.* Let our souls in that confidence

* It is to be remembered that the reclining posture was used at the table (see § 60.) to prevent the idea of that gross familiarity which has commonly been excited by the expressions in this and other passages in the common translation, and which the language of some pious writers, in allusion to them, has countenanced. In this view those lines of Dr. Watts, B. iii. H. xv. ver. 2, 3, are very reprehensible. Ep.

† Or *piece* of meat, dipped in a thick kind of sauce made of dates, raisins, and other ingredients, which the Jews still use, to represent the clay in which their fathers wrought in their Egyptian bondage.

‡ MARK, "It is one of the twelve."

be strengthened to all the labours and sufferings to which he may call us forth.

It is a melancholy reflection, that there should be any one in this select company, to whom this endearing promise did not belong; especially one who, having *eaten of Christ's bread*, should, in such a sense and degree as *Judas, lift up his heel against him*. Deliver us, O Lord, from any share in that guilt! We are treated as thy friends; we are set at thy table: let us not ungratefully *kick against thee*, while *the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib!* [To prevent such base conduct] let us be jealous over ourselves, *with a godly jealousy*. Happy are they whose hearts witness to their sincerity in the presence of him that searches them, and can cheerfully say *Lord, is it I?* Let them say it humbly too; lest the infirmity of nature prevail upon them beyond their present purpose or apprehension, and lead them on to do that, the very thought of which they would now abhor.

How artfully must *Judas* have conducted himself, when on such an intimation no particular suspicion appears to have fallen on him! But how vain is that artifice, be it ever so refined, which, while it preserves a character in the sight of men, cannot in the least degree impose upon Christ! The day will come when he will lay open the false and ungrateful hypocrite, in a more overwhelming manner than that in which he here exposed *Judas*; and, whatever advantage he may have gained, either by professing religion, or by betraying it, he will undoubtedly find that *it had been good for him that he had never been born*. One would have imagined that an admonition like this, which laid bare the secrets of his heart, and warned him so plainly and faithfully of his danger, might have wrought some remorse in his heart, or at least have proved some impediment to the immediate execution of his design: but being now given up by the righteous judgment of God to the influence of *Satan*, and the lust of his own depraved mind, he is exasperated, rather than reclaimed by it; and immediately goes forth, under the covert of the night, to hasten the accomplishment of that work of darkness, the consequences of which had been so awfully represented.

O Lord, let thy grace, and thy love, do that for us which thy terrors alone cannot do! Let our hearts be melted by that nobler principle, and taught to abhor every thing which would displease thee! Oh, let them flow forth into such workings of compassion to the afflicted as engaged the blessed Jesus to relieve the poor out of his own little stock; and into those sentiments of candour which would not permit the apostles, even after this admonition, to imagine *Judas* altogether so bad as indeed he was, but led them to put the mildest construction on their Master's ambiguous address to him! Such may our mistakes be, wherever we do mistake; the errors of a charity, which would not by excessive rigour injure the vilest sinner, and much less the least and weakest of God's servants!

SECTION CLXXI.

Christ exhorts his disciples to mutual love, forewarns them of their approaching trial, and foretells Peter's fall. LUKE xxii. 31—34. JOHN xiii. 31, &c.

WHEN therefore he [*i. e.* Judas] was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. And if God be glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself; and *the time will presently come, when he will eminently glorify him.* Little children, *it is yet but a little while I am with you; ye shall seek me,* and, as I said to the Jews, whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. I give you a new commandment, That ye love one another: *yea, that* even as I have loved you, ye also love one another.* For by this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for each other.

Simon Peter said to him, Lord whither art thou going? Jesus answered him, Whither I am going thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said to him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? O Simon, Simon, behold Satan has requested *permission to assault you† all*, that he may sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith may not utterly fail; and when thou art returned, strengthen thy brethren. And he said to him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. But he said to him, Peter, I most assuredly say unto thee, It shall not be *the time of cock-crowing to-day*, before thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

REFLECTIONS.

Alas, how ready are we to forget ourselves; and how much safer are we in Christ's hands than in our own! How frequently do we resolve like *Peter*, and in how many instances do we fall like him! We see the malice of Satan, and how eagerly he desired to try the apostles, and even to *sift them as wheat*: we see also the gracious care of our Redeemer, who, foreseeing the danger of his servants, laid in an unsought remedy, to which they respectively owed their security, or their recovery. Let us rejoice that the great enemy is under such restraints, and can have no power against us, unless by permission from above. Let us rejoice that Christ is a constant and invariable friend to his people; and still appears as an *Advocate with the Father*, and as a tender faithful *Shepherd*, watching over them for good, while Satan is *seeking to devour them*. If at any time that adversary get an advantage over us, let us endeavour in the strength of divine grace an immediate recovery; and *when restored*, let us exert ourselves to *strengthen our brethren*: for surely it is most reasonable that we, who

* "That" being transposed (as it is by *Campbell*) renders the sense clearer.
Ed.

† The word *you* here is plural *you*. Ed.

are surrounded with such various, and such sensible infirmities, *should have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.*

In this instance, as in all others, let us be mindful of the dying charge, the *new commandment* of our dear Lord; and let us shew upon all occasions this distinguishing badge of our relation to him, even our *love to each other*. So will our profession be adorned, and the *Son of man* be further glorified, by the conduct of his servants on earth: so shall he at length glorify us with himself, and after a short absence call us to follow him into those regions of perfect love which must of course be the seats of everlasting joy.

In the mean time, send down, O gracious *Emmanuel*, thy Spirit of love on all thy followers; that we may no longer glory in the little distinctions of this or that party, but may shew we are Christians by this resplendent ensign of our order! May we bind it on our shoulders as a mark of honour, and wear it as a crown upon our heads; that the spirit of hatred, reproach, and persecution may vanish like an unwholesome mist before the sun, and it may again be universally said, as of old, *Behold, how these Christians love one another!* Amen!

SECTION CLXXII.

Christ, at the conclusion of the passover, institutes the eucharist. MATT. xxvi. 26—30. MARK xiv. 22—26. LUKE xxii. 19, 20.

AND as they were eating, or just as they had finished the paschal supper, Jesus took a cake of bread; and having given thanks, and blessed it, he brake and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you. Do this in commemoration of me. And in like manner, after they had supped, he also took the cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, Drink ye all of it: and they all drank of it. For, said he to them, This cup is my blood, *even that of the new covenant (or the new covenant, in my blood)* which is shed for you and for many more, for the forgiveness of sins. And, verily, I say unto you, That from this time, I will drink no more of this produce of the vine until that day when I shall drink it new with you in the kingdom of God my Father. And when (*according to the usual custom at the close of the passover*) they had sung an hymn,* they went out to the mount of Olives.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us now review, with most thankful acknowledgment, this gracious legacy of our dying Redeemer, this reviving and nourishing ordinance, which he instituted for the benefit of his church *the same night in which he was betrayed*. So tenderly did his love for them prevail when his heart was full of his own sorrows! May we always consider to what purposes this holy rite was ordained; and as we shall see the wisdom of the appointment, so we shall also be both awakened to attend to it, and assisted in that attendance!

* What the Jews usually sung at the passover was, what they call the *Hallel*, which begins at *Psal.* cxiii. and ends with cxviii.

It is the *memorial of the death of Christ*, by which we represent it to others, and to ourselves. May we be ever ready to give this most regular and acceptable token, that we are not ashamed to fight under the banner of a crucified Redeemer!—It is also the seal of the *new covenant in his blood*. Let us adore the grace that formed and ratified that *everlasting covenant*, so well ordered in *all things*, and so *sure*: And whenever we approach to this sealing ordinance may we renew our consent to the demands of that covenant, and our expectation of those blessings which are conveyed by it! a consent and expectation so well suited to the circumstance of its being ratified by the blood of Jesus. Thus may every attendance nourish our souls in grace, and ripen them for glory; that at length all may be fulfilled and perfected in the *kingdom of God*.

In the mean time may God, by the influences of his Spirit, give to all professing Christians right notions of this ordinance, and a due regard for it; that, on the one hand, none may, under the specious pretence of honouring it, live in the habitual neglect of so plain and important a duty; and that, on the other, it may never be profanely invaded by those who have no concern about the blessings of that covenant it ratifies, and impiously prostitute it to those secular views, above which it was intended to raise them! And may none that honour the great author of it encourage such an abuse, lest they seem to lay the very cross of Christ as the threshold to the temple of those various idols to which ambitious and interested men are bowing down their souls!

SECTION CLXXIII.

Christ warns his apostles of their danger, and comforts them with the views of future happiness, and with the assurance of his presence, and that of his Father, in the way to it. LUKE xxii. 35—38. JOHN xiv. 1—14.

LUKE xxii. 35.

- 35 **B**UT before our Lord quitted the guest-chamber, he entertained his disciples with some affectionate discourses. And he said to them, When I sent you out on your embassy, without either purse or scrip, or shoes, did you want any thing? And they said, No-
- 36 thing. Then he said to them, But now let him that has a purse take it, and also a scrip for provisions; and let him that has no sword even sell his garment and buy one: for so long a journey, and so sharp a conflict, is before you, that you had need be well armed and
- 37 furnished for it, For I assure you that my enemies are now about to apprehend me as a malefactor, and this prophecy which is written (*Isa. liii. 12.*) must yet be accomplished in me.—“And he was “numbered with the transgressors;” for all the things contained in the prophecies must have an end, and receive their accomplishment
- 38 in my death. And they said, Lord, behold here are swords. And he said to them, It is enough. He then directed them to another kind of defence; that which arises from piety and faith; and said to them,

JOHN xiv. 1.

- 1 Let not your heart be troubled : believe in God ; believe also in
 2 me. In my Father's house are many mansions.* And if not, I
 3 would have told you.† I am going to prepare a place for you. And
 if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive
 4 you to myself, that you also may be where I am. And you know
 5 whither I am going ; and you know the way. Thomas, *still ex-*
pecting a temporal kingdom, says to him, Lord, we know not whi-
 6 ther thou art going, and how then can we know the way ? Jesus
 says to him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life ; no man
 7 cometh to the Father but by me. If you had known me *aright*,
 you would have known my Father also : and from henceforth you
 8 know him, and have seen him. Philip *then* says to him, Lord,
 9 shew us the Father, and it is enough for us. Jesus says to him,
 Have I been with you so long time, and hast thou not known me,
 Philip ? He that has seen me has seen the Father ; and how then
 10 dost thou say, Shew us the Father ? Dost thou not believe that I
am in the Father, and the Father is in me ? The words which I
 speak to you, I speak not of myself ; but the Father who dwells in
 11 me, He performs the works *which you have so often seen*. Believe
 me *therefore*, that *I am* in the Father, and the Father is in me ; or
 12 at least believe me on account of those works. Verily, verily, I
 say unto you, He *among you my disciples*, that believes in me, the
 works which I perform, he shall perform also ; yea, greater in
some respects than these shall he perform, because I go to my Fa-
 ther, *who has reserved the most amazing gifts of the Spirit to honour*
 13 *my return into glory*. And whatsoever you shall ask in my name,
subservient to the end of your ministry, I will do it, that the Father
 14 may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name,
 I will do it.

REFLECTIONS.

As we see in the beginning of this section that care of Christ over his servants which may engage us cheerfully to trust him for providential supplies, when employed in his work, so we see in the remainder of this, and the following discourses, the most affectionate discoveries of the very heart of our blessed Redeemer, overflowing in every sentence with the kindest concern, not only for the safety but the comfort of his people. We see a lively image of that tenderness with which he will another day *wipe away all tears from their eyes*. Surely, when he uttered these words he was also solicitous that *our hearts might not be troubled* ; and therefore has provided a noble cordial, the strength of which shall continue to the remotest ages, even *Faith in his Father, and in him*. Oh may that blessed principle be confirmed by what we have now been reading !

* *Moras* signifies, quiet and continued abodes, as does the English word *Mansions*.

† There are various readings of this passage, which in the common copies appears somewhat strange. The *Ethiopic* version is, " Behold I tell you I am going to prepare, &c." W. En.

Let us observe with what a holy familiarity our Lord speaks of the regions of glory; not, as his servants do, like one dazzled and overwhelmed with the brightness of the idea; but as accustomed and familiarized to it by his high birth. *In my Father's house are many mansions*; (delightful and reviving thought!) and many inhabitants in them, who we hope through grace will be our companions there, and every one of them increase and multiply the joy. It was not for the apostles alone that Christ went to *prepare a place*: he is *entered* into heaven as our *Forerunner*; and we, if we are believers indeed, may be said, by virtue of our union with him, to *sit together in heavenly places in him*. Let us continually be tending thither, in more affectionate desires, and more ardent pursuits. *We know the way*; we hear the truth; oh may we also feel the life! By Christ, as the true and living way, may we come to the Father; that we may have *eternal life*, in knowing him, *the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent*! In Christ may we see him, and have our eyes and our hearts open to those beams of the divine glory which are reflected from the face of his *only-begotten Son*, who is *full of grace and truth*! Has he been thus discovered to us, as our Father, and our God, let it suffice us. Let it diffuse a sacred and lasting pleasure over our souls, though other desirable objects may be veiled or removed; and engage us to maintain a *continual fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*.

To this we are invited by every declaration of his readiness to hear and answer our prayers: and though those miraculous powers of the Spirit are ceased, whereby the apostles were enabled to equal, or even to exceed, the works of their Master, yet as we have so many important errands to the throne of grace, in which the glory of God and the salvation of our souls is concerned, let us come with a *holy boldness* to it, in dependence on Jesus, that great *High-priest over the house of God*, who is *passed into the heavens*, and amidst all the grandeur of that exalted state regards his humble followers on earth, and ever appears under the character of their Advocate and their Friend.

SECTION CLXXIV.

Christ recommends to his disciples a regard to his commands as the best proof of their love to him, promising his Spirit, and declaring his readiness to meet his approaching sufferings. JOHN xiv. 15, &c.

15 IF you love me keep my commandments. And I will ask the
 16 Father, and he will give you another comforter, that he may
 17 abide with you for ever. *Even* the Spirit of truth, whom the
 world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him;
 18 But ye know him, for he dwells with you, and shall be in you. I
 will not leave you orphans, but I will come to you, *by my spiritual*
 19 *presence, and the tokens of my constant care*. Yet a little while,
 and the world seeth me no more; but you shall see me, *so as to*
 20 *feel the effects of my regard to you*. Because I live, you also shall
 21 live. In that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you
 in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments and keeps

- them, he it is that loveth me : and he that loveth me shall be loved by my Father, and I will *also* love him, and will manifest myself to him.—Judas (not Iscariot*) says to him, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world ? Jesus answered and said to him, If any man love me, he will observe my word, and *if he shall be found so to do*, my Father will love him, and we will *both of us* come to him, and will make *our* abode with him. But he that does not *really* love me, does not observe my words, and therefore must expect no such benefits. See to it therefore that you diligently attend to what I say, and [remember] the word which you hear me speak is not merely mine, but the word of the Father that sent me.
- These things I have spoken unto you while I continued personally with you. But the Comforter even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and remind you of all things which I have said to you. Peace I leave with you, as my legacy; my peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, I give unto you; in an empty form or unmeaning compliment, but sincerely and effectually. Let not your heart therefore be troubled, neither let it be afraid.—You have heard how I said unto you, I go away and come again to you : if you loved me, with a wise and rational affection, you would rejoice, because I said I go to the Father ; for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it does come to pass you may more firmly believe. I shall not hereafter discourse much with you for the prince of this world is coming to separate us : nevertheless he has nothing in me : no guilt or inward corruption to give him power over me. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and even as the Father has commanded me, so I do, however painful such obedience may be.—Arise, let us go hence.

REFLECTIONS.

Surely, if we are not entire strangers to the divine life, we cannot read such discourses as these without feeling some warm emotions of love to Christ : and if indeed we feel them, let us consider how they are to be expressed. Our Lord directs us to do it in the most solid and the most acceptable manner, by a constant care to keep his commandments ; and sure such commandments as his cannot be grievous to a soul that truly loves him. The more we live in the practice of them, the more cheerfully may we expect the abundant communications of his Spirit to animate and strengthen us.

If we are Christians indeed, let us not, in any circumstance of life, look on ourselves as helpless and abandoned orphans. Human friends may forsake us ; but Christ will come to us : he will manifest himself to the eye of faith, though to the eye of sense he is invisible ; and

* Judas Iscariot was gone out. This Judas was also called Thaddæus and Lebbeus, the son of Alphaeus and the brother of James, a near relation of our Lord.

† Alluding to the usual parting salutation "Peace be with you." Ed.

his heavenly *Father will love us*, and watch over us for good : yea, he *will come and dwell* in the obedient soul by the gracious tokens of his intimate and inseparable presence. And do we any of us experience this ? We have surely reason to say that, by way of admiration, which the *apostle* said by way of inquiry, *Lord, how and whence is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world !* What have we done to deserve these gracious and distinguishing manifestations ! Nay, how much have we done to forfeit them ! even more than many, from whom they are withheld !

With unutterable joy let us review this rich legacy of our dying Lord : *peace I leave with you ; my peace I give unto you.* Lord, evermore give us *this peace* with God, and with our own consciences ! for if *thou wilt give quietness, who can make trouble ?* How serenely may we then pass through the most turbulent scenes of life, when all is quiet and harmonious within ! Thou hast *made peace through the blood of thy cross* ; may we preserve the precious purchase and inestimable gift inviolate, till it issue in everlasting peace ! In this let our *hearts* be encouraged ; in this let them *rejoice* ; and not in our own happiness alone, but also in that of our now glorified and exalted Redeemer.

As the members of his body, we ought certainly to maintain a pleasing sympathy with our *Head*, and to triumph in his honour and felicity as our own. *If we love Christ ; we should rejoice, because he is gone to the Father.* And the same consideration may in its degree comfort us when our pious friends are removed : if we *love them* with a rational and generous friendship, and are not too much influenced by selfish affections under that specious name, *our joy* for their exaltation will greatly temper the *sorrow* which our own loss must give us.

Our Lord uttered these words in the the near views of a grievous assault from the *prince of this world*, who is the prince of darkness ; but there was *no corruption in him* to take part with the enemy. Too much, alas, does he find *in us* to abet his temptations : let us earnestly pray that the *grace of Christ* may be *sufficient for us* ; and that as *his love to the Father* engaged him to go through this painful conflict with the tempter, *his love to us* may make us partakers of his victory. *In his name* let us *set up our banners* ; and the *powers of hell* shall flee before us.

SECTION CLXXV.

Christ represents himself under the emblem of a vine, and exhorts his disciples to faith and persevering obedience. JOHN XV. 1—11.

BEFORE they left the guest-chamber*, our Lord further said to his disciples, I am the true vine, and my Father is the hus-

* Some circumstance it may be supposed, occasioned a little delay, after Christ proposed to arise and depart. Probably they then arose from the table, [and he out of the fulness of his heart, continued speaking to the disciples standing.]

- 2 bandman. Every branch in me which bears no fruit he taketh away* ; *cuts it off in his righteous judgment* : and every branch which brings forth fruit he purges or *prunes* it, that it may bring
3 forth more fruit. Now (*since the traitor is gone out*) ye are all
4 clean by means of the word which I have spoken to you. Continue in me, and I *will be* in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it continue in the vine, so neither can you unless
5 ye continue in me. I am the vine, and ye are the branches. He that abides in me and I in him†, he bringeth forth much fruit : for
6 separate from me you can do nothing. If any one does not abide in me, he is cast out *as a fruitless branch, lopped off from the vine*, and is withered ; and *as men gather up such dry sticks*, and throw them into the fire, and they are burnt, *so will be the end of those*
7 *unhappy creatures*. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done for you.
8 In this is my Father glorified that you bring forth much fruit ;
9 and so shall ye be my true disciples. As the Father has loved
10 me, so have I *also* loved you : continue in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will continue in my love ; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and continue in his love.
11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy in you might continue, and *that your joy may be full*.

REFLECTIONS.

How desirable it is that we may learn from this discourse to regard Christ, at all times, as the spiritual Head, from whom life and vigour are to be derived to all his people ! Let us by the exercise of an unfeigned faith *abide in him as the true vine* ; as being always sensible that *without him we can do nothing* ; and that, if we are in him only by an external profession, we are not only in danger of being cut off, and taken away, but shall in the end *be cast into the fire*. May we rather *be purged* and pruned, though it should be with the most painful dispensations of providence ; if by this means our *fruitfulness* may be promoted *to the glory of God*, and to the benefit of the world ! May *his word* operate daily upon us, to *cleanse* us from remaining pollutions ! and if we thus desire to be *clean*, let us *take heed to our way*, according to the tenour of that word.

We see our encouragement to *pray* ; let us take it from Christ, and not be dismayed, nor yield to unbelieving suspicions. *As the Father has loved Christ, so does he also love his people*. Let us preserve and cultivate this sacred friendship ; and, whatever it may cost us, let us endeavour to *continue his love*, and to avoid whatever would forfeit it ; making it above all things our care to *keep his commandments*. Christ always observing those of his heavenly Father, cannot but always and invariably continue the object of his love and delight : may our conduct be such as that he may see reason to *rejoice in us* ; and then we shall also have the surest foundation for a sublime and solid joy.

* Perhaps our Lord might here particularly refer to the separation of Judas from him. Ed. See v. 3. and *chap.* xiii. 10. 11. § 171.

† Or, "in whom I abide." C.

SECTION CLXXVI.

Christ renews his exhortation to mutual love, and declares the Jews inexcusable in their unbelief. JOHN xv. 12, &c.

- 12 **T**HIS is in a *peculiar manner* my commandment, That ye love
 13 one another, even as I have loved you. No man has greater
 love than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends.
 14 You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you. I do not
 15 any longer call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what
 his Lord doth: But I have called you friends; for all things that I
 16 have heard from my Father, I have declared to you. You have not
 chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have ordained you that you
 should go and bear fruit in *distant countries*, and that your fruit
 should continue *to the remotest generations*. I have also made you
so eminently the favourites of heaven, that whatsoever you shall ask
 of the Father, he may give it you.
- 17 These things* I *again* command you, that ye love one another.
 18 If the world hate you, *ye have no reason to be offended or surprised*,
 19 for you know that it hated me before you. If you were of the
 world, the world would love its own;† but because you are not of
 the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, upon this ac-
 20 count the world hateth you. Remember the word which I spake
 to you *before*, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they
 have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have
 21 kept my saying, they will also keep yours. But all these things
 they will do to you for my name's sake, because they do not know
 22 him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them they
 would *comparatively* have had no sin; but now they have no ex-
 23 cuse for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If
 24 I had not done among them such works as no other man *ever* did,
 they had not had *any sin comparable to that which they are now un-*
der; but now, *as they have rejected my superior miracles which they*
have seen with their own eyes, it is plain they have hated both me
 25 *and my Father*. But *this is all permitted*, that the word which is
 written concerning David in their law (*Psal. xxxv. 19.*) might be
 26 fulfilled in me, "Surely they hated me without a cause." But
 when the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the
 Father, *even the Spirit of truth*, who proceeds from the Father,
 27 he shall bear testimony to me. And you also shall, *by his power-*
ful assistance bear testimony to me, because you have been with
 me from the beginning.

* "This I command you." C.

† A strong intimation, that even in nations which profess Christianity, if true religion fall to a very low ebb, they that exert themselves remarkably for the revival of it, must, on the very principle here laid down, expect hatred and opposition; and that the passages in scripture relating to persecution are not so peculiar to the first ages, or to Christians living in idolatrous countries, as some have supposed.

REFLECTIONS.

The Son of God condescends to speak under the character of a *Friend*; and with what humble gratitude should we attend to his words! He lays aside the majesty of a sovereign to assume this more tender relation; and surely our overflowing hearts must inquire, Blessed Jesus, what shall we do to express the friendship on our side? Let us observe what he has here declared, *Ye are my friends indeed, if ye do whatever I command you. Lord, we will run the way of these thy commandments, when on this noblest principle thou shalt enlarge our hearts!* He has loved us with an unexampled affection, which has approved itself *stronger than death*; and, in return, he requires us to *love one another*. How gracious a command! How merciful to our fellow-creatures and to ourselves, who should infallibly feel the benefit of the practice of it, both in the delight inseparable from benevolent affections, and in the circulation of kind and friendly offices, which, degenerate as human nature is, few are so abandoned as not to endeavour to repay! Who would not imagine that the whole world should feel and obey the charm? And yet, instead of this, behold they *hate Christ*, and his servants for his sake, though *without a cause*, and against the strongest engagements. Miserable creatures! who by a necessary consequence, whatever they may fondly imagine, *hate the Father also*, and stand daily and hourly exposed to all the dreadful terrors of an almighty enemy.

Let us not wonder *if the world hate us*; nor greatly regard if it injure us. *We are not of the world, nor is the servant greater than his lord*: but surely the opposition which the gospel brings along with it is nothing when compared with those blessings which it entails on all who faithfully embrace it. Were the sufferings and difficulties a thousand times greater than they are, we ought to esteem *the Pearl of price*, the most happy purchase at any rate; and to be daily returning our most thankful acknowledgments, that Christ sent forth his apostles, qualified with such a knowledge of himself, and assisted by such power from his Spirit, appointing them *to go and bring forth fruit*; even fruit which *should remain* to the remotest ages. Through his guardian care it still remains in the world: Oh may it flourish more abundantly among us! and may its efficacy on our hearts and lives be more apparent! And may divine grace convince those who now reject and oppose it, that in the midst of such various evidence of his having *come and spoken to them, they have no cloak for their sin!* but, with whatever fond excuses they may amuse themselves and others, it will quickly appear, that *the bed is too short to stretch themselves on it, and the covering too narrow to wrap themselves in.*

SECTION CLXXVII.

Christ, to reconcile his disciples to their sufferings, and to his remove, mentions his sending the Spirit, which would be a great support to them and their cause. JOHN XVI. 1—15.

- 1 **T**HESE things (*said Jesus*) I have spoken to you that, *when the*
 2 *storm arises*, you may not be offended. They shall indeed
 cast you out of the synagogues, or excommunicate you; yea, the hour
 is coming that whosoever killeth you shall think he offers an ac-
 3 ceptable service* to God. And these things they will do unto you
 4 because they have not known either the Father or me. But I have
 spoken these things to you, and forewarned you of them, that when
 the season comes, ye may remember that I told you of them for
 the further confirmation of your faith. And I did not indeed say
 these things to you from the beginning because I was then with
 you, and could easily give you proper instructions and consolations as
 5 new difficulties arose; But now I speak them because I am going
 away to him that sent me. And yet none of you asketh me, Whi-
 6 ther dost thou go? But because I have spoken these things unto
 you, and talked of leaving you, sorrow has filled your hearts.
 7 But I tell you the truth in saying, It is advantageous to you that
 I should go away: for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not
 8 come to you; but when I go I will send him to you. And when
 he comes he will, by your ministry, convince the world of sin, and
 9 of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they do not
 believe in me, to whom his operations will bear unanswerable testi-
 10 mony: of righteousness and innocency, because I go to my Father, and
 ye see me no more; the descent of the Spirit† being a proof that I
 † I am accepted of him, and received into glory. And of judgment, be-
 cause the prince of this world is judged: The world shall be con-
 vinced of my power to execute judgment, because Satan the great
 head of the apostacy is condemned already‡ and shall then be triumphed
 over, when his oracles are silenced, his power restrained, and the gos-
 pel propagated through the world.
 12 I have yet many things to say to you, but you are not able to
 13 bear them now.|| But when he, even the Spirit of truth, is come,
 he will lead you into all truth; for he will not speak of himself,
 but whatsoever he shall hear that will he speak, and he will shew

* The word *λατρίαν* signifies an oblation or sacrifice; so that, as Archbishop Leighton observes, "the servants of Christ should be considered
 "not only as sheep for the slaughter, but for the altar too."

† Compare Acts ii. 33. and Rom. i. 4.

‡ Compare John xii. 31. § 148.

|| These other things to which our Lord refers might probably relate to the abrogation of the ceremonial law, to the doctrine of justification by faith, the rejection of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, and the like; which might have given some offence to the disciples, till their remaining prejudices were removed. The prudence of Christ in this respect is an excellent pattern for ministers; and we had need to pray that we may neither forget nor abuse it.

14 you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he will take of
 15 mine; *of my doctrines and benefits*, and will shew it to you. All
 things *indeed* whatsoever the Father hath are mine; therefore I
 said that he will take of mine and will shew it to you.

REFLECTIONS.

How great is the ignorance and folly of them that persecute their brethren in the name of the Lord, and kill his dear children under the pretence of *offering him* an acceptable *sacrifice*! Thus were the apostles treated by those that knew not God for whom they professed all this burning zeal. Let us bless God that we are providentially sheltered from those effects of it which might otherwise bear so hard upon us: and let us diligently watch over our hearts, that no irregular affections may work there, and no uncharitable sentiments be harboured. When, like the apostles, our *hearts* are *filled with sorrow*, let us be cautious that they may not be stupified by it, so that any call of duty should pass unheard, or any opportunity of religious advancement unimproved: and let us not be indolent in our enquiries into the meaning of those dispensations which we do not understand; but seriously consider whether we are, not sorrowful for that which is indeed designed for our advantage, and in the issue will be matter of rejoicing to us.

We hear to what purposes *the Comforter* was sent. His coming was designed in a peculiar manner for the advantage of the apostles: and was of greater service to them than the continuance of Christ's presence with them in the body would have been, not only to support and comfort them under all their trials, but to acquaint them with *all necessary truth*, and fully to instruct them in the mysteries of godliness. And he came also for the conviction of an apostate world; for the important errand he was sent upon was to awaken men's minds, and to *convince them* of their own guilt, and of *Christ's righteousness*, and of that awful *judgment* which should be executed on the most inveterate of his enemies. Let us often think of the force of the *Spirit's testimony* to the truth of Christianity, and endeavour to understand it in all its extent. Let us bless God that the gospel, and the character of his Son, were thus vindicated; and rejoice in the views of that complete conquest, to which *Satan* is already adjudged. In the mean time let us earnestly pray that the influences of the *Holy Spirit* may be communicated to us in such a manner that Christ may be *glorified* in us, and we in him; and that the *things of Christ* may be *taken, and shewn to us by that Spirit*; for it can only be done by means of his influence and operations.

SECTION CLXXVIII.

Our Lord assures his disciples that his separation from them would not be final, but that he would still act as their Guardian, and make them finally victorious. JOHN XVI. 16, &c.

- 16 **A**ND Jesus further said to his apostles, A little while and you shall not see me, and again a little while and you shall see
 17 me, because I go to the Father. Some of his disciples therefore said one to another, What is this that he says to us? "A little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall
 18 see me; and because I go to the Father?" They said therefore among themselves, What is this little while of which he speaks?
 19 we know not what he says.—Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him for some explication, but were afraid of being upbraided for the slowness of their apprehension, and therefore said to them, Do you inquire of one another concerning this which I said, A little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little
 20 while and ye shall see me? Verily, verily I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament for a while on account of my being taken away from you, and the world shall rejoice as if it had prevailed against me: and you shall be sorrowful at the loss of my presence:
 21 but your sorrow shall quickly be turned into joy. A woman when she is in labour has sorrow because her hour is come; but when she has brought forth a child she remembers her tribulation no more, for joy that a man is born into the world. And so you indeed have sorrow now in expectation of [my departure] but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and no one shall deprive you of your joy.
 23 And in that day ye shall not inquire * any thing of me: verily verily I say unto you, That whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in
 24 my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name, not having been used to regard me as mediator between God and man. Ask [thus] and you shall receive, that your joy
 25 may be full.—These things I have spoken to you in parables, but the hour is coming when I will speak no more to you in parables (or dark sayings) but I will tell you what relates to the Father
 26 with plainness. In that day ye shall ask him in my name; and I do not merely say to you, that I will ask the Father on your account; for the Father himself loveth you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God, as the messenger of his grace to men: for indeed I came out from the Father, and am come into the world to enlighten and save it; and now again, I am leaving the world, and am going to the Father.

* The word here is *αἰτέω*, which properly signifies to make inquiry, though it sometimes means the same as the following word *αἰτέω* to present a request.

29 His disciples said to him, Behold now thou speakest plainly,
 30 and usest no parable. Now we know, *by thy discerning our inmost doubts on this head*, that thou knowest all things, and hast no need that any one should ask thee *any questions* ; on this account we be-
 31 lieve that thou camest out from God. Jesus answered them, Do you now believe ? *In a little time you will act as if you had no faith*
 32 *in me ; for behold the hour is coming, yea is now just come*, that you shall be scattered, every one of you to your own *habitations and employments*, and shall leave me alone : Yet I am not alone,
 33 for the Father is with me.—These things have I spoken to you that you might have peace in me. In the world you shall have affliction, but be courageous, for I have overcome the world.

REFLECTIONS.

We are, perhaps, often regretting the absence of Christ, and looking back with emulation on the happier lot of those who conversed with him on earth in the days of his flesh : but if we are true believers in an unseen Jesus, it is but *a little while and we shall also see him* ; for he *is gone to the Father*, and will so successfully negotiate our affairs there, that whatever our present difficulties and sorrows are, they shall end more happily than those of a woman, who after all the pangs and throes of her labour, through the merciful interposition of divine providence, is made the joyful mother of a living child.—In the mean time, we have surely no reason to envy the world its joys and triumphs : alas, its season of *weeping* will quickly come ! But our lamentations are soon to be *turned into songs of praise*, and our hearts to be filled with that solid, sacred, and peculiar joy, which, being the gift of Christ, can *never be taken away*.

While we are in this state of distance and darkness, let us rejoice that we have access to the *throne of grace* through the prevailing name of Christ. Let us come thither with holy courage and confidence, and ask that we may receive ; and so our joy may be full. With what pleasure may we daily renew our visits to that throne, before which Jesus stands as an Intercessor ; to that throne, which is possessed by the Father, who himself loveth us, and answers with readiness and delight those petitions which are thus recommended ! May our faith in Christ, and our love to him, be still on the increasing hand ; and our supplications will be more and more acceptable to him, whose *loving-kindness is better than life*.

Surely we shall be frequently reviewing these gracious discourses which Christ has bequeathed us as an invaluable legacy. May they dwell with us in all our solitude, and comfort us in every distress ! We shall have no reason to wonder if human friendship be sometimes false, and always precarious : the disciples of Christ were scattered in the day of his extremity, and left him alone, when they were under the highest obligations to have adhered to him with the most inviolable fidelity. May we but be able like him to say, that our Father is with us ; and that delightful converse with God, which we may enjoy in our most solitary moments, will be a thousand times more than an equivalent for whatsoever we lose in the creatures. *In the*

world we must indeed have tribulation ; and he that has appointed it for us, knows that it is fit we should : but since Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, who was made perfect through sufferings, has overcome the world, and disarmed it ; let us seek that peace which he has established, and press on with a cheerful assurance, that the least of his followers shall share in the honours and benefits of his victory.

SECTION CLXXIX.

Christ's prayer to the Father, that he might be glorified ; and that those who were given him might be kept through his name. JOHN xvii. 1—12.

- 1 JESUS spake these words, and then lifted up his eyes to heaven
 2 and said, Father, the hour is come ; glorify thy Son, that thy
 3 Son also may glorify thee ; according as thou hast given him power
 4 over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to all that thou hast
 5 given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee the
 6 only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. I have glo-
 7 rified thee on earth ; I have finished the work which thou gavest
 8 me to do. And now, O Father, do thou glorify me with thine own
 9 self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.
 10 I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out
 11 of the world : They were thine, and thou gavest them to me, and
 12 they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things
 13 whatsoever thou hast given me are of Thee. For the words which
 14 thou gavest to me I have given to them, and they have received
 15 them, and have known in truth that I came out from Thee, and
 16 have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them : I pray
 17 not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me ; for they
 18 are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am
 19 glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world : but
 20 these are yet in the world, and I am coming to Thee. Holy Fa-
 21 ther, keep these whom thou hast given me through thy name, that
 22 they may be one, even as we are. While I was with them in the
 23 world, I kept them in thy name, yea I guarded them whom thou
 24 gavest me with a constant care, and none of them is lost, unless it
 25 be the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

REFLECTIONS.

With pleasure let us behold our gracious Redeemer in this posture of humble adoration ; *lifting up his eyes* to God with solemn devotion, and pouring out his pious and benevolent Spirit in those divine breathings which are here recorded. From his example, let us learn to pray ; and from his intercession, to hope. We know that *the Father heareth him always* ; and singularly did he manifest that he heard him now, by all that bright assemblage of glories which shone around him in the concluding scenes of his abode on earth, and in those that attended his removal from it : and in all this too did the blessed Jesus manifest his zeal for the *glory of the Father*. May we emulate that holy temper ! and when we pray even for our own consummate happiness in the

heavenly world, may we consider it as ultimately centering in the honour and service of God.

Well may we be encouraged to hope for that happiness, since Christ has an universal *power over all flesh*, and over spirits superior to those that dwell in flesh; with which he is invested on purpose that he may accomplish the salvation of *those whom the Father has given him*, even of every true believer. We see the certain way to this life, even the *knowledge of God in Christ*: let us bless God, that we enjoy so many opportunities of obtaining it; and earnestly pray that *he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness*, would, by his divine rays, shine forth on our benighted souls; and so animate us in his service, from the noblest principles of gratitude and love, that we may be able to say, even in our dying moments, with somewhat of the same Spirit which our Lord expressed, *Father, we have glorified thee on earth, and finished the work which thou gavest us to do*; and therefore, being *no more in the world, we come unto thee*. Then may we hope, in our humble degree, to partake of that glory to which he is returned, and to *sit down with him on his victorious throne*.

In the mean time, may our faith see, and our zeal confess Christ! May we *acknowledge his divine authority*, as having *come out from the Father*! May we be united in love to him, and to each other; and be kept by that *divine word* which is the security of his people, that *none of them shall be lost*! Let the *son of perdition*, who perished even from among the *apostles*, teach us an humble jealousy over our own hearts, whatever external privileges we enjoy; and engage us to maintain a continual regard to *him who is able to keep us from falling*; and to *present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*!

SECTION CLXXX.

Jesus recommends his apostles, and Christians in every age, to the regards of his Father, praying for their union on earth and glory in heaven. JOHN xvii. 13, &c.

13 **O**UR Lord proceeded in his address to God, saying: And now I
 come unto Thee, and these words I speak while I am in the
 world, that they *who now hear me* may have my joy fulfilled in
 14 them. I have given them thy word, and yet the world has hated
 them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the
 15 world. I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world,
 16 but that thou wouldst preserve them from the evil. They are not
 17 of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through
 18 thy truth; thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world,
 19 I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanc-
 tify* myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth.
 20 Nor do I pray for these alone, but for them also who shall *hereafter*
 21 believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as
 thou Father art in me, and I in thee: that they also may be one in

* That is, set myself apart as an offering holy to thee.

us ; that the world *seeing their charity and holy joy*, may believe
 22 that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I
 23 have given them, that they may be one even as we are one : I in
 them, and thou in me ; that they may be made perfect in one, and
 that so the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved
 24 them as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they whom thou
 hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold
 my glory which thou hast given me ; for thou hast loved me be-
 25 fore the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, though the
 world has not known Thee, I have known Thee, and these have
 26 known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared thy name to
 them, and will declare it, that the love with which thou hast loved
 me may be in them, and I in them : *that I may take up my constant
 residence in them by my spiritual presence, when my bodily presence
 is removed,*

REFLECTIONS.

We have indeed perpetual reason of thankfulness that our gracious Redeemer *spoke these words in the world*, and recalled them thus exactly to the memory of his *beloved disciple* so many years after, that we in the most distant ages of his church might, by reviewing them, have *his joy fulfilled in us*. Let us with pleasure recollect that those petitions which Christ offered for his apostles were expressly declared not to be intended *for them alone* ; but, so far as circumstances should agree, *for all that should believe on him through their word*, and therefore for us, if we are real, and not merely nominal believers. For us doth he still *pray, not that God would immediately take us out of the world*, though for his sake we may be continually hated and injured in it ; *but that he would keep us from the evil* to which we are here exposed. *For our sakes* did he also *sanctify himself* as a propitiation for our sins, *that we might also be sanctified through the truth* ; for he *gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*.

May these wise and gracious purposes of his love be fulfilled in us ! *May we be one* with each other, and with him ! May that piety and charity appear in the whole series of our temper and behaviour, which may evidently shew the force of our religion, and reflect a conspicuous honour upon the great Founder of it ! And may all concur to train us up for that complete felicity above, in which all the purposes of his love centre ! It is the declared will of Christ, and let us never forget it, that his people should *be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory which the Father has given him*. And there is apparent congruity, as well as mercy, in the appointment : that *where he is, there also should his servants and members be*. The blessed angels do undoubtedly behold the glory of Christ with perpetual congratulation and delight ; but how much more reason shall we have to rejoice and triumph in it when we consider it as the glory of one in our own nature, the glory of our Redeemer and our Friend, and the pledge and security of our own everlasting happiness ! Let us often be lifting up the eyes of our faith towards it, and let us breathe after heaven in this view ; in the

mean time, with all due zeal, and love, and duty, *acknowledging the Father and the Son*, that the joys of heaven may be anticipated in our souls, while *the love of God is shed abroad there by his Spirit, which is given unto us*; even something of that love wherewith he has loved Jesus our incarnate Head.

SECTION CLXXXI.

Jesus in his way to the garden of Gethsemane, renews his caution to Peter and the other apostles. MATT. xxvi. 31—35. MARK xiv. 27—31. LUKE xxii. 39. JOHN xviii. 1.

AND when Jesus had spoken these words, he came out from *the guest-chamber*, and according to *his usual* custom, went forth with his disciples over the brook Kedron to the mount of Olives, where there was a garden, into which he entered; and his disciples also followed him. Then Jesus says to them, All of you shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written (*Zech. xiii. 7.*) "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." But after that I am risen I will go before you into Galilee.* But Peter answered and said to him, Though all should be offended because of thee, yet I will never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that† *even* this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But Peter spake the more eagerly, and said to him, Though I should die with thee I will not deny thee in any manner or degree.‡ Likewise also said all the disciples.

REFLECTIONS.

So feeble is the heart of man, and yet so ready to trust to its own strength! So gracious is the Lord Jesus Christ, that great *Shepherd and Bishop of souls*, who gave himself to be smitten for his flock when they had forsaken him; and then returning, sought them out again, and fed them in richer pastures than before! How reasonable is it that our hearts should be fixed in the most inflexible resolution for his service! How fit that we should every one of us say, with the utmost determination of soul, *Lord, though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee!* For how could death wear a more graceful, or a more pleasing form, than when it met us close by our Saviour's side, and came as the seal of our fidelity to him? Surely this is the language of many of our hearts before him, especially when warmed and animated by a sense of his dying love to us. Yet *let us not be high-minded*; for Peter, after this declaration, *denied his Master*; and the same night in which they had protested they would never leave him, *all the disciples forsook him and fled*. Nor, on the other hand, let the view of that frailty discourage, though it ought to caution, us; for the time came when each of them behaved as they here spoke; and they who in his very presence

* It appears from *Matt. xxviii. 16.* that he mentioned a certain mountain there.

† MARK. "To-day."

‡ The energy of the original cannot easily be reached in a version.

acted so weak a part, through the influences of his strengthening spirit, *resisted unto blood, and loved not their lives unto death, for the testimony of Jesus.*

SECTION CLXXXII.

Jesus enters the garden of Gethsemane, and falls into an agony; during which his disciples sleep, for which he reproves them, and warns them of the enemies' approach. MATT. XXVI. 36—46. MARK XIV. 32—42. LUKE XXII. 40—46.

THEN, after this discourse with his disciples, Jesus comes with them to the place called Gethsemane. And when he was arrived at the place, he says to eight of his disciples, Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder. And he took [*the rest*] with him, Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John. And he began to be in great dejection, amazement, and anguish of mind*. Then he says to them, My soul is surrounded with sorrow, even unto death; continue here and watch with me, and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

And o when he was withdrawn about a stone's throw from them, he kneeled down, and then prostrated himself on his face to the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, that season of sorrow might pass from him. And he said, Abba Father, if it be possible (*r* and all things are possible with thee) take away this cup of bitterness† from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh to the three disciples, and finds them asleep. And he says to Peter, Simon, dost thou sleep? Couldst thou not watch one hour? [*And then addressing them all*] Were ye so unable to watch one hour with me? Watch and pray that ye may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is forward, but the flesh is weak.—And he went away again the second time, and prayed, speaking much the same words, saying, O my Father, if this cup cannot pass from me without my drinking it, thy will be done. And returning back to his disciples he found them asleep again, for through fatigue and trouble their eyes were weighed down; and when he admonished them again, they knew not what to answer him. And he left them and went away again, and prayed the third time, speaking the same words, or to the same effect‡ as before, saying, Father [*I entreat thee*] if thou pleasest, to take away this cup from me||; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.

* The common translation falls short of the emphasis of the original, [which the author well illustrates.] There is reason to conclude that there was something extraordinary and supernatural in the case.

† MATT. "Let this cup pass."

‡ It is plain the words were not entirely the same, and it is certain that *logos* often signifies matter.

|| To suppose that our Lord prayed to be excused from suffering [the death of the cross] appears inconsistent with that steady constancy which he always shewed, and with John xii. 27, 28. § 148, where he disowns such a prayer. It seems much safer to expound it as Sir M. Hale does (Contemp. i. § 9.) as relating to the terror and severity of his present combat. This throws great light on Heb. v. 7. [See this point well illustrated by the author of *Christ the Mediator*.]

And there appeared to him an angel from heaven strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more intensely; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down on the ground. And rising up from prayer, he came *back* to his disciples the third time, and *again* found them sleeping for sorrow, *which had exhausted their spirits*. And he said to them, Why do you *still* sleep? Arise and pray, that you may not enter into temptation. And *as all this did not rouse them*, he said to them *ironically*, now sleep on and take your rest. It is enough: *the season of watching is over*. Behold the hour is come, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us go: behold he that betrayeth me is just at hand.

REFLECTIONS.

On the most transient survey of this amazing story we cannot but fall into deep admiration. What a sight is here! Let our souls turn aside to behold it with a becoming temper: and surely we must wonder how the disciples could sleep in the midst of a scene which might almost have awakened rocks and trees to compassion.

Behold *the Prince of life*, God's incarnate and only-begotten Son, *drinking of the brook in the way*; and not only tasting, but drawing in full draughts of that bitter cup which his heavenly Father put into his hands on this awful occasion. Let us behold him *kneeling*, and even *prostrate on the ground*, and there pouring out his *strong cries and tears to him that was able to save him from death*. Let us view him in this bloody agony, and say, *If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* If even Christ himself was so depressed with sorrow and amazement, and the distress and anguish he endured were such, that in his agony the sweat ran from him *like great drops of blood*, when *our iniquities were laid upon him*, and it pleased the Father to bruise him, and to put him to grief; how must the sinner then be filled with horror, and with what dreadful agonies of anguish and despair will he be overwhelmed, when he shall bear the burden of his own iniquities, and God shall *pour out all his wrath* upon him? Behold, how *fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!*

Here was no human enemy near our blessed Redeemer; yet such invisible terrors set themselves *in array against him*, that his very soul was *poured out like water*; nor was there any circumstance of his sufferings in which he discovered a greater commotion of spirit. Nevertheless, his pure and holy soul bare all this without any irregular perturbation. In all this he sinned not by a murmuring word, or an impatient thought: he shone the brighter for the *furnace of affliction*, and gave us at once the most wonderful and the most amiable pattern of resignation to the divine disposal, when he said, *Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt*.—May this be our language under every trial! Lord, we could wish it were; and we would maintain a holy watchfulness over our own souls, that it may be so! But in this respect, as well as in every other, we find that even when *the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak*. How happy is it for us that the blessed Jesus *knows our frame*, and has learnt, by what he himself suffered in our frail

nature, to make the most compassionate allowance for its various infirmities! Let us learn to imitate this his gentle and gracious conduct, even in an hour of so much distress. Let us bear with and let us pity each other, not aggravating every neglect of our friends into a crime; but rather speaking of their faults in the mildest terms, and making the most candid excuses for what we cannot defend. Let us exercise such a temper, even in the most gloomy and dejected moments of life; which surely may be well expected of us, who ourselves need so much compassion and indulgence almost from every one with whom we converse; and, which is infinitely more, who owe our all to the forbearance of that God, *of whose mercy it is that we are not utterly consumed.*

SECTION CLXXXIII.

Jesus is betrayed by Judas, and seized by the guard, to whom he voluntarily surrenders himself, and is then forsaken by all his disciples. MATT. xxvi. 47—56. MARK xiv. 43—52. LUKE xxii. 47—53. JOHN xviii. 2—12.

NOW when our Lord retired to the garden, Judas also that betrayed him knew the place; for Jesus often resorted thither with his disciples. Judas therefore taking with him a band of *soldiers* and *some Jewish* officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, comes thither with torches, and lamps, and weapons. And immediately, while he was yet speaking to *his disciples*, behold Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude from the chief priests, and scribes, and elders of the people, with swords and staves. Now he that betrayed him went before them, and had given them a signal, saying, He whom I shall kiss * is the person: lay hold of him and lead him away safely. And being come *into the garden* † he went directly to Jesus and said, Hail, Rabbi, Rabbi, and then kissed him. But Jesus said to him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Judas! dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss? Then Jesus, knowing all things that were coming upon him, went forth towards *his enemies*, and said to them, Whom do you seek? They answered him, Jesus the Nazarene. Jesus says to them, I am *he*. And Judas also who betrayed him, stood with them. Then as soon as he said to them I am *he*, they drew back and fell to the ground. Then *when they were recovered*, he asked them again, Whom do ye seek? And they said to him *as before*. Jesus the Nazarene. Jesus answered I have told you that I am *he*: If therefore you seek me, let these *my friends* go their way; that the saying he uttered *before* might be accomplished, “of those “whom thou hast given me, I have lost none.”

Then they came and laid their hands upon Jesus, and took him *prisoner*. Now when the disciples saw what would be the consequence, they said to him, Lord, shall we smite *them* with the sword? And behold one of them that were with Jesus, Simon Peter, having a sword,

* This was a common Jewish mode of salutation among friends after some absence.

† LUKE, “he drew near, &c.”

stretched out his hand and drew it *with a rash zeal*, and smote a servant of the high-priest, whose name was Malchus, and, *striking at his head*, cut off his right ear. Then Jesus said unto Peter, Return thy sword into the sheath again; for all that take the sword shall perish by the sword. Dost thou think that I cannot now entreat my Father, and he would presently furnish me with more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled *which have foretold* that thus it must be? The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it? Then the band of *Roman soldiers*, with the captain and the Jewish officers, seized Jesus and bound him. But Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far; *stay a moment* :* and *calling Malchus*, he touched his ear, and healed him. Then Jesus said, in that same hour, to the chief-priests and to the captains of the temple-guard, and to the elders who were come, *and to the multitude*, Are you come out as against a robber, with swords and staves to seize me? When I was with you every day *and sat teaching in the temple*, you did not apprehend me, *or stretch out your hands against me*. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness is now permitted to rage. And all this is done agreeably to the schemes of providence, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.

Then all the disciples forsook him and fled. And a certain youth, *waked by the noise of the tumult, arose out of his bed, and having only a linen cloth thrown about his naked body*, followed him. And the young men of the guards, *suspecting him to belong to Jesus*, laid hold on him. But he, leaving the sheet, fled away from them naked.

REFLECTIONS.

The heroic behaviour of the blessed Jesus, in the whole period of his sufferings, will easily make itself observed by every attentive eye, though the sacred historians, according to their usual but wonderful simplicity, make no encomiums upon it. With what composure does he go forth to meet the traitor! With what calmness does he receive that malignant kiss! With what dignity does he deliver himself into the hands of his enemies, yet plainly shewing his superiority over them, and *leading as it were even then captivity captive*!

We see him generously capitulating for the safety of his friends, while he neglected his own; and afterwards, not only forbidding all the defence they attempted to make, but curing that wound which one of his enemies had received in this assault on him. With what meek majesty did he say, *Suffer ye at least thus far!* And he touched his ear, and healed him. We hear his words, we behold his actions with astonishment: but surely our indignation must rise within us, when we see so amiable and excellent a Person thus injured and abused; when we see the Son of man betrayed with a kiss; betrayed by his intimate friend, who had eaten of his bread, and yet lifted up his heel against him; and at the same time forsaken by all his disciples, even by him whom he

* The author understands this of Christ's desiring liberty to perform one act of compassion before he was bound. *Campbell* strongly objects to this sense, and renders the expression *εἰς αὐτὸν ἵνα ἡσυχῇ* let this suffice: q. d. no more of this; let pass what is done.

most tenderly loved. Let us not wonder if some of our friends prove false ; and others seem to forget us when we have the greatest need of their assistance. When we deserve so much less friendship than Christ did, let us not think it strange if we find but little more. Nor can we reasonably be so much amazed, as we might otherwise have been, to see sinners going on under the most awful rebukes of providence ; when we consider that these wretches, who had been *struck down to the ground* by one word of Christ's mouth, should immediately rise up and stretch forth their impious hands against him, to seize and bind him ; though they might well have known that they lived only by his indulgence and forbearance, and that the same word that struck them down to the ground, could have laid them dead there. Touch our hearts, O Lord, by thy grace ; or it will be in vain that we are smitten with thy rod !

In all the remainder of this story, let us remember that Jesus voluntarily gave himself up to sufferings which he circumstantially foreknew ; even though he could have commanded to his assistance whole legions of angels. *His Father's will* was an answer to all that nature could plead in its own cause ; and the good hand from which this cup of his severest sufferings came, reconciled him to all the bitterest ingredients it contained. How reasonable then is it that we who, having had fathers of our flesh that corrected us, submitted to the rod, and gave them reverence, should much rather, after the example of our innocent and holy Redeemer, be in subjection to the Father of our spirits, and live.

SECTION CLXXXIV.

Jesus is conducted to the palace of Caiaphas : Peter follows him thither, and denies him thrice. MATT. xxvi. 57, 58, 69, &c. MARK xiv. 53, 66, &c. LUKE xxii. 54—62. JOHN xviii. 13—27.

THUS the officers and people apprehended Jesus. And they led him away first to Annas ; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was high-priest that year. (Now Caiaphas was he who gave it as his advice to the Jews, that it was fit that one man, though innocent, should die for the people.) And Annas sent him bound* to the palace of the high-priest, where all the chief priests and the elders were assembled with him, waiting for Jesus.

And Simon Peter and another disciple† followed Jesus. But Peter followed him afar off. That other disciple was known to the high-priest, and went into the palace o with Jesus. But Peter stood without at the door. That other disciple therefore, who was known to the

* MATTHEW, "And they who had apprehended Jesus took and led him away."—LUKE, "and brought him to the palace." Every intelligent reader who looks at the original work, will see the propriety of omitting this clause, and of transposing another.

† John himself, who modestly declines mentioning his own name. N. B. All the other Evangelists say of Peter that he followed afar off, but not of John, as he would appear to have done from the author's disposing of the words. What follows is a proof to the contrary.

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high-priest, went out *of the room into which Jesus was taken to be examined*, and spake to her that kept the door, and brought Peter *[into the hall.]* And when *[the servants and officers]* had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall *[for it was cold]* and were set down together, Peter sat down among them, to see the end of this affair, and warmed himself at the fire. And as Peter was *thus* sitting without in the hall below, there came to him one of the maid servants of the high-priest (the damsel that kept the door) and seeing Peter as he sat warming himself by the fire, she fixed her eyes earnestly upon him, and said to some that stood near, This man was also with him: And turning to him, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? * And he denied him before them all, and said, Woman, I am not, I do not know him, nor do I understand what thou sayest. And he went out into the portico, and the cock crew. †

And when he was gone † out into the portico, after a little while another maid servant saw him again, and said to them that were there, This man was also with Jesus of Nazareth. ‖ They therefore said to him; Art not thou also one of his disciples? And another man saw him and said, Thou art also one of them. And Peter again denied it with an oath, and said, Man, I am not, I do not know the man.

And o about the space of one hour after, *[Peter being returned into the hall]* another man confidently affirmed, saying of a truth this man was also with him, for he also is a Galilean. And upon this they that stood by came to Peter, and said to him again, Surely thou art also one of them; for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech (*which agrees*) discovers thee. And one of the servants of the high-priest (being a relation of his whose ear Peter had cut off) said to him, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Then Peter denied it again, and began to curse and swear, saying, ‡ I do not know this man of whom you speak. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew ¶ the second time. And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. *** And Peter

* MARK, "Yea thou wast also with Jesus the Nazarene." MATT. of "Galilee."

† JOHN xviii. 18, "And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals (*for it was cold*) and they warmed themselves: and Simon Peter stood with them, and warmed himself." v. 25. This seems improperly inserted here, and wholly superfluous, excepting the words in *italic*.

‡ "And when he had been gone out." D. "And as he went out into the porch." C. When he had gone in again is not mentioned, and therefore it should be left as uncertain; but that he did return is plain from our Lord's looking upon him when the cock crew, and its being said that he then *went out*.

‖ MARK, "And she began to say to them that stood by, Surely this is one of them."

§ LUKE, "Man, I know not what thou sayest, [D. meanest.]" It is not to be supposed that Peter used all the precise words which the several evangelists have given, but that each records the substance of what he said, with some little variation in the expression. EN.

¶ Some have supposed that this was not the voice of the animal, but the sound of a Roman trumpet, which was called the *Cock-crowing*.

*** The author suggests in the paraphrase, that Jesus was now brought out of the inner room into the hall, while the council were consulting what they should do with him.

recollected the word of the Lord Jesus, how he had said to him, *that very evening*, Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and covering *his head with his mantle*,* he wept bitterly *when he thought on his heinous crime, in all its aggravating circumstances.*

REFLECTIONS.

How loudly does this affecting story speak to us in the words of the apostle, *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.* Peter professed the warmest zeal; and gave his Lord repeated, and, no doubt, very sincere assurances of the firmest resolution in his cause; and yet, except Judas the traitor, none of his brethren fell so low as he.† But a few hours before, he had been with Christ at the sacred table, and had heard from his own lips those gracious discourses which, as echoed back from his word, do still strike so strongly on the heart of every true believer. He had just seen those words remarkably, and even miraculously, verified, that *Jesus having loved his own that were in the world, loved them to the end.* How reasonably then might it have been expected that his own should also have continued their most zealous and constant affection to him! But Peter, who, if possible, was more than doubly his as a disciple, as an apostle, as a distinguished intimate, most shamefully *denies him*; and that not only once, but a second, yea, and a third time, even with *oaths and curses*, as if he would, by that diabolical language, give a sensible proof that he did not belong to Christ: and who indeed, that had heard it, would have imagined that he did? Nay, to aggravate it yet further, it was done in the presence of the other disciple, and even of Christ himself, who surely was much more painfully wounded by this perfidiousness of Peter than by all the rage and fury of his enemies. *Lord, what is man!* What is our boasted strength but weakness! and, if we are left unto ourselves, how do our most solemn resolutions melt like snow before the sun! *Be thou surety for thy servants for good!*

The Lord turned and looked upon Peter. So may he graciously look upon us if we at any time make any approach towards the like sin! May he look upon us with a glance which shall penetrate our hearts, and cause floods of penitential sorrow to flow forth! *Peter went out, and wept bitterly.* He quitted that dangerous scene where temptation had met and vanquished him; and chose retirement and solitude to give vent to his overflowing soul. Thus may we recover ourselves; or rather, thus may we be recovered by divine grace, from those slips and falls which in this frail state we shall often be making! Let us re-

* "When he thought thereon." C. T. But it doth not appear from any passage in antiquity that *επιβάλει* ever has such a signification. *Elsner* and others therefore render it, "covering" the head, which was a token of mourning and shame, well becoming Peter on this occasion. See 2 Sam. xv. 30, &c.

† Dr. Clarke conjectures that Peter was suffered to *fall fouler* than any of the rest of the *apostles* (except Judas the traitor) and to make more remarkable mistakes in his conduct, that we might thus be cautioned against that extravagant regard which would afterwards be demanded to him and his pretended successors. *Clarke's 17 Sermons, No. x.*

tire from the business and snares of life ; that we may attend to the voice of conscience, and of God speaking by it ; and may so taste *the wormwood and the gall*, that our souls may long have them in remembrance. To conclude ; let us express the sincerity of our *godly sorrow* by a more cautious and resolute guard against the occasions of sin, if we would not be found to trifle with God when we pray *that he would not lead us into temptation, but would deliver us from evil.*

SECTION CLXXXV.

Jesus examined at the high-priest's hall, and afterwards condemned by the sanhedrim. MATT. XXVI. 59—68. MARK XIV. 55—65. LUKE XXII. 63, &c. JOHN XVIII. 19—23, 28.—

NOW to return to the examination of Jesus before the council.— The high-priest therefore asked Jesus concerning his disciples and concerning his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I have spoken openly to the world : I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews continually resort, and have said nothing in secret. Why dost thou ask me ? Ask those that heard me, what I have spoken to them : behold they know what I have said. But when he had spoken these things, one of the officers who stood by, gave Jesus a blow, saying, Dost thou answer the high-priest thus ? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear testimony concerning that evil ; but if well, why dost thou strike me ?—Now the chief priests and the elders and the whole sanhedrim sought for false evidence against Jesus that they might put him to death ; but they found none ; for though many false witnesses came, and falsely testified against him, yet they found none *sufficient*, for the testimonies did not agree. At last there came two o [*others*] who rose up and falsely testified against him, saying, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it *up* again in three days. *Yea, one of them designing to aggravate the matter, confidently affirmed,* We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, made without hands.— Yet neither thus did their testimony *exactly* agree ; so that they could not for shame proceed upon such evidence to condemn Jesus. They resolved therefore to try him in full council.

And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief-priests and the scribes, *who made up the sanhedrim, assembled together ;* and they led Jesus away from the house of Caiaphas to their grand council-chamber. And, producing *what imperfect evidence they had,* the high-priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing ? What is it that these men testify against thee ? But Jesus was silent and made no reply. And they said to him, If thou art the Messiah, tell us *plainly.* And he said to them, If I tell you, you will not believe. And if I ask you *wherefore it is that you persist in your infidelity,* you will neither answer nor dismiss me.— And again the high-priest answered and said to him, I adjure thee

by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Messiah, the Son of the blessed God, *or not*. And Jesus *boldly* said to him, Thou hast said: I am *the Messiah*. Moreover I declare to you *all*, That hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right-hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven. And they all said, Art thou then *really* the Son of God? And he said to them, Ye say *right*, and may be assured that I am.

Then the high-priest rent his clothes and said, He has spoken blasphemy: what further need have we of witnesses? Behold now you have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. What need have we of any other testimony? for we ourselves have heard *it* from his own mouth. And they all condemned him as guilty of a capital crime.—Then the men that had Jesus in custody insulted him, and began to spit in his face, and to buffet him; and others beat him. And having covered his eyes, the officers struck him on the face with the palms of their hands, and in a contemptuous manner asked him saying, *r* Who is he that smote thee? Now prophecy to us, thou Christ. And many other things they blasphemously spake against him.

REFLECTIONS.

Thus was the patient Lamb of God surrounded by his blood-thirsty enemies: Thus [as David speaks] did the dogs encompass him, and the strong bulls of Bashan beset him on every side: Thus was he brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth: He was taken from judgment, and suffered the worst kind of murder, even that which had the appearance of being legal. But those gentle words, which he dropped in the midst of all the injuries which were offered him, are surely worthy ever to be recorded and remembered. It had always been his care to provide things honest in the sight of all men: and as he answered with a most graceful and courageous appeal to all that heard him, as to the innocence and usefulness of his doctrine; so it is well worthy our observation and reflection, that God so far restrained the rage and malice of hell, that no such false witnesses arose against him, as could on the whole asperse his character, or bring it under any brand of public infamy; though Judas, as well as others, might have sought a reward, or at least an indemnity, for their own villany, in accusing him. And indeed it is no inconsiderable instance of God's providential government of the world, that wicked men are restrained by this one remainder of reverence for the divine omniscience, and dread of his vengeance, from destroying the reputations and lives of his children; especially in countries where (as in our own) the punishment which human laws inflict on perjury is so much below its desert.

When Jesus was examined on oath, he witnessed a good confession, and cited those that were now his judges to appear at his bar. Nor was it a vain boast! The Son of man is now sitting at the right hand of power, and will ere long come in the clouds of heaven: and then they that condemned, and insulted, and pierced him, shall mourn because of

him. May we be now so wise as to kiss the Son in token of our humble allegiance to him, lest he be then justly angry with us: yea, lest we immediately perish from the way, when his wrath is but beginning to be kindled!

SECTION CLXXXVI.

Jesus is brought before Pilate: The Jews demand judgment against him, and Pilate examines him. MATT. XXVII. 1, 2, 11—14. MARK XV. 1—5. LUKE XXIII. 1—4. JOHN XVIII. 28—38.

AND as soon as morning was come, all the chief-priests consulted with the elders of the people, and the scribes, and the whole sanhedrim, against Jesus, how they might put him to death. And when they had bound him, the whole multitude of them arose and led him away to the Prætorium, or judgment-hall in which the Roman magistrate used to sit, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.—And it was yet early. And they themselves went not into the judgment-hall (*being in the house of a Gentile*) lest they should be polluted, and so prevented from eating the passover. Pilate therefore, *complying with their religious scruples*, came out to them, and said, What accusation do you bring against this man? They answered and said to him, If this man were not a notorious offender we would not have delivered him to thee. Then Pilate said to them, Take ye him back, and judge him according to your law. Then the Jews said to him, it is not lawful for us to put any man to death*. And they began to accuse him of crimes which might render him most obnoxious to the Roman power; saying, We have found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay tribute to Cæsar, and saying that he himself is Messiah, a king. [*This accusation of theirs to the Roman governor*] was wisely over-ruled by providence, that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which he spake, signifying what kind of death he should die; namely that of crucifixion†.

And when he was thus accused by the chief priests and elders of these and many other things, he made no answer. Then Pilate said to him, Dost thou answer nothing? Behold how many things they witness against thee. Hearest thou not? But still Jesus did not answer him to any one word. So that Pilate the governor was greatly astonished, and having a favourable opinion of him, was willing to dis-couse with him more privately. Pilate therefore entered again into the Prætorium, and called Jesus in; and as Jesus stood before him Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou indeed the king of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Dost thou say this of thyself, or have others told it thee concerning me? Pilate replied, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation, and the chief-priests have delivered thee to me under a charge

* The Jews being now a conquered people, and not having the power of life and death, they could not execute Jesus without a warrant from the Romans.

† See John iii. 14. xii. 32, 33. Matt. xx. 19. According to the Jewish law, Lev. xxiv. 16. he would have been stoned, as a blasphemer, as Stephen afterwards was.

of treason. Tell me therefore, what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world; *nor is it my design to establish any claim which should interfere with that of Caesar.* If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have fought that I might not have been delivered to the Jews.* But now [*you may be assured*] my kingdom is not from hence. Pilate therefore said to him, Art thou then a King? Jesus answered him *o Thou sayest right, I am a King.* For this purpose was I born, and for this end I came into the world, that I might bear witness to the Truth. Every person who is of the Truth heareth my voice. Pilate says to him, What is Truth? And when he had said this, *not waiting for an answer*, he went out again to the Jews, and said to the chief-priests and the people, I find no fault at all in this man.

REFLECTIONS.

How much exactness in the ceremonials of religion may be found in those who have even the most outrageous contempt for its vital principles and essential duties! Yea, how much of that exactness may be made subservient to the most mischievous and diabolical purposes! These *wolves in sheep's clothing* would not enter into the house of a heathen, *lest they should be polluted*, and become unfit to eat the *pass-over*; yet they contrive and urge an impious murder, which that very heathen, though he had much less evidence of Christ's innocence than they, could not be brought to permit without strong reluctance, and a solemn, though vain, transferring of the guilt from himself to them. Justly might our Lord say, in the words of *David*, *They laid to my charge things which I knew not.* But what can defend the most innocent and excellent against malicious slanders and defamations! Or who can expect, or even wish, wholly to escape, when such accusations are brought against Christ, even by the rulers of his nation, who should have been men of distinguished generosity and honour! But instead of this they were all an assembly of murderers, and *lay in wait for their prey*, like so many devouring lions.

Pilate would renew the examination of the cause; and so far he acted a cautious and an honourable part. Yet, alas, how many that set out on such maxims, want courage and resolution to pursue them! But the courage of Christ never failed. He *witnessed before Pontius Pilate* the good confession we have now been reading; and owned himself *a king*, though at the same time he declared (what it were to be wished all his followers had duly regarded) that *his kingdom is not of this world.*—Greatly do we debase it, if we imagine it is; and most unworthy is it of those that call themselves the ministers of his kingdom to act as if they thought it was. Yet such is the wickedness of some, and such the blindness of others, in the Roman church, that, though of all the churches in the world, it is manifestly the most secular kingdom, it arrogates to

* Though the number of Christ's followers, had they all been armed, may be thought to have been no match for the Jewish and Roman power, it is to be remembered that the populace appeared zealously on his side, but a few days before, and that the reason of their turning against him was, his not assuming a temporal kingdom, as they expected.

itself the name not only of a part, but of the whole, of Christ's kingdom here below.

Christ came to *bear witness to the truth*; and a careful attendance to his testimony will be the best proof we can give that we love the truth, and the best method we can take to make ourselves acquainted with it. And of so great importance is the truth, that it surely deserves the attentive inquiry and the zealous patronage of the greatest and the wisest of mankind. Let us not therefore, when we begin to ask, *What it is*, like *Pilate*, hurry on to some other care before we can receive a satisfactory answer; but joyfully open our minds to the first dawnings of that celestial day, till it shine more and more to irradiate and adorn all our souls. On the whole, imperfect as the character of this unhappy governor was, let us learn from him candidly to confess the truth, so far as we have discovered it; let us learn more steadily than he, to vindicate the innocent and worthy, and on no terms permit ourselves, in any degree, to do harm to those in whom, on a strict and impartial inquiry, we can *find no fault*.

SECTION CLXXXVII.

Pilate having sent Jesus to Herod, who treated him with great contempt, would persuade the Jews to consent to his release, who prefer Barabbas, and demand his crucifixion. MATT. XXVII. 15—18, 20—23. MARK XV. 6—14. LUKE XXIII. 5—23. JOHN XVIII. 39, &c.

BUT, though *Pilate* declared to the chief priests and people that he found no fault in *Jesus*, they were more violent, saying, He stirs up the people, teaching *sedition*, throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, even to this place. And when *Pilate* heard them speak of Galilee, he inquired if the man were a Galilean. And finding that he was of Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him away to Herod, who being himself a Jew, was also at Jerusalem in those days of the *passover*.—And when Herod saw *Jesus*, he rejoiced exceedingly; for he had a long time been desirous to see him, because he had heard much concerning him in Galilee*; and he now hoped to see some miracle done by him. And he examined him in many words, but he made him no answer. And the chief priests and scribes stood eagerly accusing him. And Herod, with his soldiers, treated him in a contemptuous manner; and having derided him for pretending to be a King, clothed him with a splendid robe, and sent him back to *Pilate*. And the same day *Pilate* and Herod became friends to each other, for before this they were at enmity between themselves. And *Pilate* having called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, You have brought me this man as one that has perverted the people, and behold I have examined him in your presence, and have found no crime in this man as to the things that you have charged him with; nor yet has Herod; for I sent you to him with the prisoner, and behold nothing worthy of death has been done by him. Therefore when I have chastised him I will let him go.

*Luke ix. 7, 9. § 77, and Matt. xiv. 2.

Now it was usual at the feast of the passover, and through custom, necessary, for the Roman governor to release to the people any one prisoner whom they desired. And there was then a noted prisoner, whose name was Barabbas; that lay bound with some others, who had made an insurrection in the city with him, and who had committed murder in the insurrection: he was also known to be a robber on the high-ways. And the people therefore, when they were gathered together, began with great clamour, to demand of Pilate that he would do as he had always done to them on the like occasions. And Pilate answered them, saying, You have indeed a custom that I should release to you one at the passover: Whom will ye therefore that I release unto you; Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ, the king of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him up out of envy, and therefore was willing to save his life. But the chief priests and elders excited and persuaded the mob to ask that he would rather release Barabbas to them, and that thus they might destroy Jesus. Then [when the governor put the question to them again] and said, Which of the two do you desire I should release unto you? They all cried out again with one consent, saying, Not this man but Barabbas: Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas. And Pilate again answered and said unto them, What therefore would ye have me do with Jesus who is called Christ, whom you call the king of the Jews? And they all cried out again and said to him, Crucify him: let him be crucified. Pilate therefore, desirous to release Jesus, spake to them again, urging them to consider what they did; but they cried out again, saying, Crucify, crucify him. And Pilate said to them the third time, Why? What evil hath he done? I have found no capital crime in him: I will therefore chastise him and let him go. But they were urgent, with loud voices, and cried out the more abundantly, demanding that he might be crucified. And their voices, and those of the chief priests prevailed.

REFLECTIONS.

Behold, how all imaginable circumstances seem to conspire to increase the infamy thrown on that sacred head, which now most worthily wears a crown of eternal glory! *Of a truth, O Lord, against thy holy Child Jesus, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the chief priests, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel had determined before to be done.* The wisest person on earth was, by Herod and his soldiers, derided as a fool; the most deserving was condemned by the chief priests; and the most innocent was treated as a criminal by Pilate, and furiously demanded as a public victim by the Jews. All the proofs of his innocence are overborne by a loud and a senseless cry; and those *hosannahs* with which the streets and temple were so lately echoing, are exchanged into *Crucify him, crucify him*. So uncertain is human applause, and so unrighteous may human judgments be!

But in the midst of all, the blessed Jesus stands collected in himself. Firm as a rock he bears the violence of the storm, and is not moved by all the furious waves that beat upon him; and when he saw a reb-

ber and a murderer preferred before him, and a sentence of the most cruel death clamorously called for and demanded against him, he silently commits himself to him that judgeth righteously, who ere long brought forth his righteousness as brightness, and his salvation as a lamp that burneth. Lord, if thou callest us out to share in thy sufferings, may the Spirit of God and of glory thus rest on us ! And may neither the scorn nor the rage of our enemies separate us from thee, who didst so courageously bear all this for us ; nor may they ever sink us into any weakness of behaviour unworthy of those who have the honour to call themselves thy followers !

SECTION CLXXXVIII.

Pilate, having renewed his efforts to persuade the Jews to consent that Jesus should be released, at length yields to their importunity. MATT. xxvii. 19, 24—31. MARK xv. 15—20. LUKE xxiii. 24, 25. JOHN xix. 1—16.

THEN Pilate took Jesus and scourged him, *to appease the rage of the populace ; but in vain.* Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus and led him away into the common-hall, called the Prætorium, and gathered to him the whole band. And having stripped him of the garment which Herod had put on him, they clothed him in purple.* *that he might have a mock resemblance of a prince.* And the soldiers having plaited a crown of thorns, put it upon his head, and put a reed† into his right-hand, *to represent a sceptre.* And then they began in a ludicrous manner, to pay their salutations to him, and bowing the knee before him, they did him reverence, and mocked him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews ! And they smote him with their hands, and spit upon him ; and at last took the reed out of his hand and struck him with it on the head, *so as to drive the thorns into his flesh.* In the mean time Pilate was trying some other prisoners ; and while he was sitting on the tribunal, his wife sent a messenger to him, saying, Have nothing to do with that righteous one ; for I have suffered many things to-day‡ on his account in a dream.

Pilate therefore came out again to the Jews, and said to them, Behold I am bringing him out to you again, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then Jesus came out, wearing the thorny crown and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, Behold the man ! *see what he has suffered, and let that content you.* When therefore the chief priests and their officers saw him, they again cried out, saying, crucify him, crucify him. Pilate said to them, Take ye him and crucify him yourselves, for I find no fault in him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by this our law he ought to die, because he made him-

* MATT. "They put on him a scarlet robe." There is no proof, nor any probability, that these terms denote two different garments. See Matt. xxvii. 31. and the author's note there.

† "Or Cane." D. "A Rod." C.

‡ That morning, after Pilate rose. The heathens imagined those dreams most significant which came about break of day. [The next whole paragraph is from John alone.]

self the Son of God. When Pilate therefore heard this expression, he was more afraid.* And *therefore* he entered *again* into the palace, and said to Jesus, Whence art thou? *What is this divine origin which thou art said to claim?* But Jesus gave him no answer. Then Pilate said to him, Dost thou not speak to me? Dost thou not know that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus replied, Thou couldst have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above.† Therefore he who delivered me to thee (*the Jewish high-priest*) hath the greater sin. And from this time Pilate endeavoured earnestly to release him. But the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend, *for every one that makes himself a king speaks against Cæsar.* When Pilate therefore heard that speech, he *was alarmed, and brought Jesus out again, and sat down on the tribunal, then erected in a place called in the Greek the Pavement, but in Hebrew Gabbatha, or the high place.* And it was *then* the preparation of the passover, and *drawing towards the sixth* hour. And he says to the Jews, Behold your king. But they *again* cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate says to them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar.

Pilate seeing that it signified nothing, but that they rather grew more tumultuous, he took water, and washed his hands in the presence of the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man; look ye to it. And all the people answered saying, May his blood be on us and on our children! And Pilate, desirous to satisfy the people, pronounced sentence, that what they demanded should be done. And he released to them Barabbas, who was thrown into prison for sedition and murder, whom they had desired; and having *already* scourged Jesus, he delivered him to their will to be crucified. And after they had mocked him, they took the purple robe off from him, and having dressed him in his own garments, *they* led him away to be crucified.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us now, by a lively act of faith, bring forth the blessed Jesus to our imagination, as Pilate brought him forth to the people. Let us with affectionate sympathy survey the indignities which were offered him, when he *gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; and hid not his face from shame and*

* For the Romans believed many poetical stories of men begotten by their deities, and thought them demi-gods; who, if injured, engaged their parents in the quarrel.

† Some think this refers to the situation of the *temple, and the power of that court*, on account of what follows.

‡ MARK has it the *third* hour. The author adopts this in the *paraphrase*, and defends it (with *Beza* and *Erasmus*) as the true reading, on the authority of the *Camb. MSS.* and of *Peter of Alexandria*, as well as of common sense.—*Campbell* disparages both these authorities, and thinks *Mark* and *Luke* may be reconciled, as it was customary to reckon by the four grand divisions of the day, 3, 6, 9, and 12, without regarding the intermediate hours, so that the time here intended was between the 3d and the 6th hour: i. e. between 9 and 12.

spitting. Behold the man! wearing his purple robe and thorny crown, and bearing the reed which smote him in his right hand for a sceptre! Behold, not merely *the man*, but *the Son of God*, thus vilely degraded, thus infamously abused! Shall we, as it were, increase his sufferings, and, while we condemn the fury and cruelty of the *Jews*, shall we *crucify him to ourselves afresh, and put him to an open shame?* Or shall we overlook him with slight and contempt, and *hide our faces from him*, who for our sake thus exposed his own?—Let the caution even of his heathen judge, who *feared* when he heard [that] he so much as pretended to be *the Son of God*, engage us to reverence him, especially considering in how powerful a manner he has since been declared to be so. Let us in this sense *have nothing to do with the blood of this just Person*.—Let his example teach us patiently to submit to those sufferings which God shall appoint for us, remembering that no enemies, and no calamities we meet with, could *have any power against us, except it were given them from above*.

How wisely was it ordered by divine Providence that *Pilate* should be obliged thus to *acquit Christ*, even while he *condemned him*; and to speak of him as a *righteous person*, in the same breath with which he doomed him to the death of the most flagitious *malefactor*! And how lamentably does the power of worldly interest over conscience appear, when, after all the convictions of his own mind, as well as the admonitions of his wife, he yet gave him up to popular fury. O *Pilate*, how gloriously hadst thou fallen in the defence of the Son of God! and how justly did God afterwards leave thee to perish by the resentment of that people whom thou wast now so studious to oblige*.

Who can without trembling read that dreadful imprecation, *May his blood be on us, and on our children!* Words which, even to this day, have their remarkable and terrible accomplishment in that curse, which has pursued the *Jews* through seventeen hundred years. Lord, may it at length be averted, and even turned into a blessing! May they *look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn*, till all the obstinacy of their hearts be subdued; till they bow down in glad submission to that *King* whom God has *set on his holy hill*, and thus are brought themselves to *reign with him* in everlasting honour and joy!

SECTION CLXXXIX.

Jesus, being delivered up by Pilate to the people, bears his cross to Calvary, and is there nailed to it. MATT. xxvii. 32—38. MARK xv. 21—28. LUKE xxiii. 26—34. JOHN xix. 16—18.

AND *Pilate* having delivered him to the soldiers, they took Jesus and led him away to the place of execution. And there were also two other men who were malefactors, led with him to be executed

* *Josephus* assures us that *Pilate*, having slain a considerable number of seditious Samaritans, was deposed from his government by *Vitellius*, and sent to Tiberius at Rome, who died before he arrived there. And *Eusebius* tells us that quickly after (having, as others say, been banished to *Vienne*, in *Gaul*) he laid violent hands upon himself, falling on his own sword.

at the same time. And carrying his cross, he went out of the city, to a place which was called in Hebrew, Golgotha, or the place of a scull. And as they led him on, they met a native of Cyrene, named Simon (the Father of Alexander and Rufus) who was passing by as he came out of the country; and they laid hold on him, and compelled him to carry the cross * after Jesus, who was now too faint to bear it. And there followed him a great multitude of people, and of women who also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold the days are coming in which they shall say, Happy are the barren, and the wombs which never bare, and the breasts that never suckled. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in the green wood, what shall be done in the dry?

And when they were come to the place called Golgotha, that is to say the place of a scull, on mount Calvary (it being customary to give criminals wine mingled with spices to cheer their spirits) they gave him vinegar mingled with gall; and when he had tasted it he would not drink it. And some of his friends having provided a cordial, they gave him also wine to drink, mingled with myrrh; but he did not receive it. And it was the third hour † of the day when they brought him to Calvary, and there they crucified him. And they crucified with him the two malefactors, the one on his right-hand, and the other on the left, and Jesus in the midst. And thus the scripture was fulfilled (*Isa. liii. 12.*) which saith, "And he was numbered with the transgressors."—And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.

REFLECTIONS.

Here let us pause a while, and make a few serious reflections on this amazing story, which the evangelists relate with so much simplicity. Behold the Son of God bearing his cross, fainting under the load of it, and at length extended upon it, and nailed to it! Him they took, and with wicked hands crucified and slew him. Blessed Jesus! was it for this that thou didst honour our nature by a union to thine own, and come from thy throne of glory to visit these abodes of misery and guilt? Was it for this that so many gracious discourses were delivered, and so many works of love and power performed? For this, that thou mightest be treated as the worst of criminals, and suspended on a cross in the air, as if unworthy of a place on earth even to die upon? Amazing and lamentable sight! Justly, O sun, mightiest thou blush to see it: justly, O earth, mightiest thou tremble to support it!

* LUKE, "and on him they laid the cross."

† Some critics would read, the sixth hour. The author objects to such a liberty; but since John says it was towards the sixth hour, when Jesus was brought to receive sentence, it may be supposed that it was near that time before he was crucified. Nor is it a greater liberty taken here to correct Mark by John, than in the former passage to correct John by Mark.

‡ MATT. "The two thieves." D. "Robbers."

Lord, like these pious women, who had the zeal and fortitude to attend thee, when thine own apostles *forsook thee and fled*, we would follow thee weeping : yet not for thee, but for ourselves ; that our guilt had brought us under a condemnation, from which we could be redeemed by nothing less than the *precious blood of the Son of God* : that *Lamb without blemish and without spot*. We would behold herein the goodness and the severity of God : for while the riches of his goodness are displayed in his providing a ransom for the redemption of lost sinners, an awful proof is given of the severity of his justice, in his not sparing his own Son, nor exempting him from the sorrows and sufferings due to sin, when he came to put himself in the stead of sinners : and may we not in such a view tremble for fear of him, and be afraid of his judgments ? Who can support the weight of his indignation, especially when it shall come aggravated by the abuse of so much love ! *If these things be done in the green wood, what shall be done in the dry ?* And if such sufferings be inflicted, where there was not any personal guilt to kindle the flame, on one who only answered for the sins of others ; what then will be the end of those who, by their own iniquities, are become as fuel prepared for the fire, and are as vessels of wrath fitted to destruction ?

How shocking is it to behold the vile indignities that were put upon a suffering Jesus, and to reflect upon the cruel treatment that he met with from his insulting enemies ! Yet have not we been verily guilty concerning this matter ? Are we not chargeable with despising Christ ? and have we not crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame ? Oh may that apology be heard in our favour, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do !* For surely sinners do not know what they do, when they pierce Christ by their sins, and turn away their faces from him.—But under all his sufferings, how amazing was his meekness ! and how compassionate the concern which he expressed for his most cruel persecutors ! May we learn patience, and love to our enemies, from so bright an example of it ! May we, like him, bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use us, and persecute us ! Instead of being ingenious to aggravate their faults, and to paint them in the most shocking colours, let us rather seek for the best excuses, which even the worst of causes will fairly bear ; influenced by that charity which unconstrained believes no evil, and hopeth all things even against hope.

Gracious Saviour ! thy dying prayer, and thy dying blood, were not like water spilt upon the ground : they came up in remembrance before God, when thy gospel began to be preached at Jerusalem : and multitudes, who were now consenting to thy death, gladly received thy word, and were baptized : and they are now in glory, celebrating that grace which has taken out the scarlet and crimson dye of their sins, and turned that blood which they so impiously shed into the balm of their wounds, and the life of their souls.

SECTION CX.

Christ's garments are divided by lot ; and while he is insulted on the cross, he shews his mercy to the penitent thief. MATT. xxvii. 35—44. MARK xv. 24—32. LUKE xxiii. 34—43. JOHN xix. 19—24.

THEN the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts of them, assigning to each soldier employed, a part; casting lots upon them, which of the four each man should take. And they also took his vest. Now the vest was without any seam, being woven from the top throughout in one piece. They said therefore one to another, Let us not tear it to pieces, but let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be; that the scripture spoken by the prophet might be fulfilled which saith (*Psal. xxii. 18.*) "They divided my garments among them, and cast lots for my vesture." These things therefore the soldiers did; and they sat down and guarded him there.

And (as the usual method was) they put on the cross over his head, a superscription of his crime: THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. And Pilate wrote this title, and put it on the cross. Many of the Jews therefore read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near to the city. And it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin letters, that it might be read by Jews, Romans, and other foreigners.—Now the chief-priests of the Jews said to Pilate, when he drew it up, Do not write, The king of the Jews; but, that he said I am the king of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written.

And the people that stood beholding this sufferer, and they that passed by, blasphemed him, shaking their heads and saying, Ah, thou, that wouldst destroy the temple and build it again in three days, save thyself; and if thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross. And in like manner also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, and the rulers also with them, derided him; and mocking said to one another, He saved others, but you see, he cannot save himself: If he be the Messiah, the elect of God, the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and save himself, that we may see his power, and then we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him* now, if he will have him, for he said, I am the Son of God. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar to drink, and saying, If thou art the king of the Jews, save thyself.

And one of the malefactors also who hung on the cross with him, upbraided him with the same, and blasphemed him, saying, If thou art the Messiah, save thyself and us. But the other answered and rebu-

* A prophane allusion to *Psal. xxii. 8.*

† *Matthew* and *Mark* use the plural number: *the thieves*—they that were crucified with him—whence some infer, that he who proved penitent at first, joined in the blasphemy. But if so, *Luke*, who is so particular, would not have omitted it. [He expressly says *ONE of the malefactors.*] I therefore conclude this to be what is called an *enallage of numbers*, of which we have other instances.

ked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, when thou art in the same condemnation? And we [*both*] indeed *are* justly condemned, for we receive *but* what is due for the crimes we have committed; but this *man* has done nothing amiss. And he *then* said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said to him, Verily I say unto thee, This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.*

REFLECTIONS.

How great and glorious does the Lord Jesus Christ appear in the midst of all those dishonours which his enemies were now heaping upon him! While these rapacious soldiers were dividing the spoils, *parting his raiment among them, and casting lots for his vesture*, God was working in all to crown him with a glory which none could take from him, and to make the lustre of it so much the more conspicuous by that *dark cloud* which now surrounded him. His enemies upbraided him as an abandoned miscreant, deserted both by God and man; but he (though able to have *come down from the cross* in a moment, or by one word from thence, to have struck these insolent wretches dead on the place, and to have sent their guilty spirits to accompany the fiends under whose influence they were) yet patiently endured all, and was *as a deaf man, who heard not their reproaches, and as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth*. But as soon as the penitent thief addressed him with that humble supplication, the language of repentance, faith, and hope, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*, he immediately hears and answers him: and in how gracious and remarkable a phrase! *This day shalt thou be with me in paradise!* What a triumph was here, not only of mercy to the dying penitent, but of the strongest faith in God, that when to an eye of sense, he seemed to be the most deserted and forgotten by him, and was on every side beset with the *scorn of them that were at ease*, and with the *contempt of the proud*, he should speak from the *Cross* as from a *Throne*, and undertake from thence, not only to dispense pardons, but to dispose of seats in paradise!

Most ungrateful and most foolish is the conduct of those who take encouragement from hence to put off their repentance perhaps to a dying moment: most ungrateful, in perverting the grace of the Redeemer into an occasion of renewing their provocations against him, and hardening their hearts in their impieties; and most foolish, to imagine, that what our Lord did in so singular a circumstance, is to be drawn into an ordinary precedent. This criminal had, perhaps, never heard of the gospel before; and now how cordially does he embrace it? Probably there are few saints in glory who ever honoured Christ more illustriously than this dying sinner, acknowledging him to be the Lord of life, whom he saw in the agonies of death; and pleading his cause when his friends and brethren forsook him, and stood afar off. But such is the corruption of men's hearts, and such the artifice of Satan, that all other views of him are overlooked, and nothing remem-

* I cannot but look on this man as a glorious instance of the power and sovereignty of *divine grace*, which produced in his last moments, all the virtues which could be crowded into so small a space.

bered, but that he was a notorious offender, who obtained mercy in his departing moments. The Lord grant that none who read this story here, may be added to the list of those who, *despising the forbearance and long-suffering of God, and not knowing that his goodness leads to repentance*, have been emboldened to abuse this scripture, so as to perish, either without crying for mercy at all, or crying for it in vain, after having *treasured up an inexhaustible store of wrath, misery, and despair*.

SECTION CXCI.

Jesus recommends his mother to the care of John, and after suffering many indignities on the cross, expires. Prodiges attend his death, and alarm the consciences of the spectators. MATT. XXVII. 45—54. MARK XV. 33—39. LUKE XXIII. 44—48. JOHN XIX. 25—30.

AND there stood near the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene. Jesus therefore seeing his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, said to his mother, Woman, behold thy son. Then he said to that disciple, Behold thy mother. And from that hour that disciple took her to his own house.

Now it was about the sixth hour (*i. e. about noon*;) and from the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole land of Judea,* till the ninth hour, or three in the afternoon. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying in the Syriac language, ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI? that is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And some of them that stood by o hearing that, scornfully said, Behold this man calls for Elijah. After this doleful cry, Jesus knowing that all things were now nearly accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled (*Psal. xxii. 15.*) said, I thirst. Now there was set, as usual, a vessel full of vinegar; and immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and putting it round a stalk of hyssop, on the top of a reed, gave it him to drink. But the rest said, Let him alone; let us see whether Elijah will come† and save him. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished. And crying out again with a strong voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit. And when he had said thus, declining his head, he dismissed his spirit, and expired.

And behold, while the sun was still darkened, the veil of the temple was rent in two in the midst, from the top to the bottom. And the earth trembled; and the rocks were torn asunder,‡ and the tombs were

* This darkness was supernatural; for being at the full of the moon, there could be no eclipse, and we have no account of its being observed any where else.

† MARK, "to take him down."

‡ The evident signs of such an event are yet visible. See *Santy's Travels*, p. 164. and *Maunder's Journey*, p. 73. Mr. Flemming tells us of a Deist who was converted by the sight,

opened, and many bodies of holy men who were sleeping were raised, and came out of the tombs after the resurrection of *Jesus*, and entered into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

And when the *Roman* centurion, who stood over against him, saw that he so cried out and expired, *expressing his confidence in God to the last*; and also saw what was then done in so miraculous a manner, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man; truly this man was the Son of God. And they that were with him, guarding *Jesus on the cross*, seeing the earthquake, and those other things which were done, feared greatly, and said, *in like manner*, Truly this was the Son of God. And all the multitude that were come together to see this spectacle, when they saw the things which were done, returned, beating their breasts, *for sorrow and remorse*.

REFLECTIONS.

And surely we, when we return from such a view of it as this, have reason to smite upon our breasts too, and to be most deeply affected with what we have heard and seen in this lively description. Let us set ourselves as with the mother of *Jesus*, and the beloved disciple, at the foot of the cross; and see whether there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow, *wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger*. Well might the sun grow pale at the sight; well might the earth tremble to support it! How obdurate must the hearts of those sinners be, who could make a mock of all his anguish, and sport themselves with his dying groans! But surely the blessed angels who were now, though in an invisible crowd, surrounding the accursed tree, beheld him with other sentiments; admiring and adoring the various virtues which he expressed in every circumstance of his behaviour; and which, while this *sun of righteousness* was setting, gilded and adorned all the horizon. Let us likewise pay our homage to them, and observe with admiration his tenderness to his surviving parent; his meekness under all these injuries and provocations; his steady faith in God in an hour of the utmost distress; and his concern to accomplish all the purposes of his life, before he yielded to the stroke of death.

Yet with what amazement must the holy angels hear that cry from the Son of God, from the darling of heaven, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!* Let not any of the children of God wonder if their heavenly Father sometimes withdraw from them the sensible and supporting manifestations of his presence, when Christ himself was thus exercised; and let them remember that faith never appears with greater glory than when, in language like this, it bursts through a thick cloud, and owns the God of Israel, and the Saviour, even while he is a God that hideth himself from us. May we, in our approaching combat with the king of terrors, find him enervated by the death of our dear Lord, who thus conquered even when he fell! May we thus breathe out our willing and composed spirits into our Father's hands, with a language and faith like his, as *knowing whom we believed, and being persuaded that he is able to keep what we commit to him until that day!*

With pleasure may we survey the awful tokens by which God owned his dying Son, and wiped away the infamy of his cross. The *veil* is now rent by the death of Jesus; let us be encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace, and to draw near to the holiest of all, into which he has entered with his own blood. May God render the knowledge of the cross of Christ the blessed means of shaking the consciences of men with powerful convictions, and of raising them from the death of sin to a life of holiness! And may we be so planted together in the likeness of his death, that we may at length also be planted in the likeness of his resurrection!

SECTION CXCI.

While Christ hangs on the cross, his side is pierced, but his legs are not broken: Joseph begs the corpse, and lays it in his sepulchre. MATT. xxvii. 55—61. MARK xv. 40, &c. LUKE xxiii. 49, &c. JOHN xix. 31, &c.

AND while our Lord was thus expiring on the cross, all his acquaintance stood with the crowd at a distance, viewing these things; and many *pious* women who had attended him when he was in Galilee, and ministered to him, had followed him [thither] from Galilee. Among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less, and of Joses; also the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, and Salome, and many other women, who came up with him to this passover at Jerusalem. Then the Jews, because it was the preparation for the sabbath, that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the sabbath-day, (for that sabbath was a great day*) entreated Pilate that their legs might be broken, to dispatch them the sooner, that they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came and brake the legs of the first malefactor, and then of the other who was crucified with him. But coming to Jesus, they did not break his legs, as they saw he was already dead. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water; the wound having reached his heart. And one who saw it has borne this testimony, and therefore his witness is true, and he knows that what he saith is true, which he declares, that you may believe.† For these things were done that the scripture might be fulfilled, in what it says of the paschal lamb, (Exod. xii. 46.) "Not a bone of it shall be broken."—And again, another scripture says, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced." (Zech. xii. 10.)

And quickly after these things, as the evening was now come, because it was the preparation, (or the day before the sabbath) behold

* A day of peculiar solemnity, being the first that followed the passover.—The Romans used to let the bodies of malefactors hang on the cross till they were eaten by birds of prey. The Jewish law forbade any body hanging on a tree to remain all night. Deut. xxi. 22, 23.

† As the grand evidence of Christ's mission is his resurrection, [it was of the highest importance that his death should have been ascertained and publicly known:] this circumstance therefore was wisely ordered, as it was a certain proof of Christ's death, for he could not have survived such a wound in perfect health. It would therefore exclude all pretences of his having been taken down alive by his friends.

there came to the governor's palace a rich man of Arimathea, a city of the Jews, named Joseph, being an honourable counsellor, a benevolent and upright man. The same had not given his vote to the counsel and action of them that condemned Jesus, but was one who also himself waited for the kingdom of God, being a disciple of Jesus, though secretly, for fear of the Jews. This man went in boldly to Pilate, and begged that he might take away the body of Jesus. And Pilate thought it strange if he were already dead; and having called the centurion to him, he asked him whether he had been dead any time. And when he knew it of the centurion, Pilate gave him leave, and commanded the body to be delivered to Joseph. And Joseph therefore, having bought fine linen, came and took down the body of Jesus, and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth. And there came also Nicodemus (who at the first came to Jesus by night) and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes that weighed about an hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and swathed it up in linen, with the spices, according to the Jewish custom of burying, *intending after the sabbath was over, to embalm it.*

Now, in the neighbourhood of the place where he was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre belonging to Joseph. There laid they Jesus therefore in Joseph's own new tomb, which he had hewn out of a rock, in which no man was ever yet laid. *And this they did [thus hastily]* because it was the Jews preparation-day, and the sabbath drew on; and the place was convenient, for the sepulchre was near at hand. And Joseph having rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, he went away. And Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the rest of the women also who came with him from Galilee, followed after them that took down Jesus from the cross; and sitting over against the sepulchre, beheld where, and how his body was laid. And they returned to the city and prepared spices and balms, *that they might be able early on the first day of the week to embalm it.* And they rested on the sabbath according to the command.

REFLECTIONS.

We have seen the sorrows of our expiring Lord: let us now, like these pious women, raise our eyes to him with an holy and unfeigned affection, and behold him pale and breathless on the accursed tree. Let us view him by faith, till the eye affects the heart, and till we learn to glory in nothing but his cross, whereby the world may be crucified to us, and we may be crucified to the world.—How wonderfully does the providence of God appear to have regarded the body of Jesus, which had so long been the Temple of the indwelling Deity; even when it was deserted of that Spirit which had lately animated it; and while it hung (amazing thought, that it ever should have hung!) between the bodies of two thieves on a cross, without the gates of Jerusalem! He, who has all hearts in his hand, interposed by a secret but powerful influence on the soldiers, who brake the legs of the malefactors, to spare those of Christ; that so nothing which looked like a prophecy of him should want its proper accomplishment. But his side was pierced; and how deep was the wound, when

immediately there came out of it blood and water ! Happy emblem of the blessed effect of his death ! *He came both by water and blood* (as *he who saw and testified* this important fact leads us to improve it, 1 John v. 6 ;) and by this means at once atones the injured justice of God, and purifies the souls of them that believe in him.

Our indignation rises against the man that could, by such an outrage as this, abuse the dead body of our Redeemer : but oh, let us seriously remember the hand which our sins had in all that was now done. *He was wounded for our transgressions ; he was bruised for our iniquities.* And therefore it is said concerning those *on whom the ends of the world are to come*, that *they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn.* May we mourn over him with a genuine, evangelical sorrow, when we consider whom we have pierced ; and how deep and how often we have pierced him ; and upon what slight temptations ; and under how many engagements rather to have bathed his wounds with our tears, and even to have exposed our own hearts to the sharpest weapon by which the madness of sinners might have attempted to injure him.

The boldness of *Joseph*, and even of *Nicodemus* himself, deserves our notice on such an occasion. They are not ashamed of the infamy of his cross, but come with all holy reverence and affection to take down those sacred remains of Jesus ; nor did they think the finest *linen*, or the choicest spices, too valuable on such an occasion. But who can describe their consternation and distress when they saw him, who they *trusted should have delivered Israel*, a cold and bloody corpse in their arms ; and left him in the sepulchre of *Joseph*, whom they expected to have seen on the *throne of David* ?—We leave for the present his enemies in triumph, and his friends in tears, till his resurrection ; which soon confounded the rage of the former, and revived the hopes of the latter ; hopes which must otherwise have been for ever intombed under that stone with which they now covered him. But happy and comfortable is the thought that this his transient visit to the grave has (as it were) left a perfume in the bed of dust, and reconciled the believer to dwelling a while in *the place where the Lord lay !*

SECTION CXIII.

Judas confessing his guilt, returns the money he had received, and hangs himself. The Jews procure a guard to be set on Christ's sepulchre.*
MATT. XXVII. 3—10, 62, &c.

- 3 **T**HEN Judas, *that perfidious disciple of Jesus*, who had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repenting of *his bargain*, carried back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief
4 priests and the elders, and said to them, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood. And they answered, *What is that*

* This story is transposed to prevent interrupting that of Christ's passion. *Matthew* seems a little to have anticipated it, for the like reason. N. B. The death of this traitor appears to have happened before that of his master ; so speedily did divine vengeance pursue his aggravated crime.

5 to us? See thou *to that*. And throwing down the pieces of money in the temple, he withdrew, and went *r* and hanged himself.
 6 And the chief priests, taking *up* the pieces of silver, said, It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of
 7 blood. But having consulted together, they bought with them
 8 the Potter's field for a burying-place of foreigners. Therefore that field was called *Aceldama*, *that is*, the field of blood, *and is so*
 9 to this day. Then was that fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet (*Zech. xi. 13.*) saying, "And I took the thirty pieces of silver" (the *usual* price of one who was sold, whom the children
 10 of Israel did sell *for a slave*). "And they were given for the Potter's field, as the Lord commanded me," *in vision*†.
—But, to return to the main story :

62 Now on the morrow which followed the day of preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees assembled together to *wait upon* Pilate; saying, Sir, we remember that this deceiver, while he was
 63 yet living, said, After three days I will rise again. Therefore
 64 *we desire thou wouldst* order that the sepulchre be secured till the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and tell the people he is risen from the dead; and so the last de-
 65 ceit will be worse than the first. And Pilate said to them, You have a guard; go your way, and make *it* as secure as you can.
 66 Accordingly they went and secured the sepulchre, sealing the stone, and setting a guard.

REFLECTIONS.

In how fatal a manner does the *way of transgressors* deceive them! Judas, no doubt, but a few hours before, was thinking with eager impatience of receiving this sum of money, which was the *wages of unrighteousness*: but though he might for a little while *roll it* as a sweet morsel *under his tongue*, yet how soon was it *turned into the gall of asps within him*?—We see the force of conscience, even in the worst of men. He that had slighted all the warnings that his Master gave him, and neither was affected by the remembrance of his goodness to him, nor by the fear of his displeasure, while he was set upon accomplishing his covetous design, no sooner comes to feel the sting of an awakened conscience, but he is filled with horror, and is unable to endure the cutting anguish of his own reflections. And thus could God, in a moment, drive the most hardened sinner into all the agonies of remorse and despair, by letting loose his own thoughts upon him, to prey upon his heart like so many hungry vultures, and make him a terror to others, and an executioner to himself.

We must surely admire the wisdom of Providence, in extorting even from the mouth of this traitor, so honourable a testimony of the

† To reconcile this account of Judas's death with that in *Acts i. 18, 19.* the author introduces, in his paraphrase, the supposition that the rope breaking he fell down a precipice, and his bowels gushed out through the violence of the fall.

‡ The author has a long note to explain and justify this quotation.

innocence of Jesus, though to his own condemnation. And who could have imagined that the supreme court of Israel itself should have been so little impressed with it, as coldly to answer, *What is that to us? See thou to that.* Is this the language of rulers, yea, of priests? But they had cast off the fear of that God whose ministers they were, and had devoted themselves to gain and ambition. They therefore felt no remorse, even when Judas trembled before them, and appeared almost distracted under the sense of a crime in which they had been confederates with him. But their consciences were seared as with a red hot iron, and all their familiar converse with divine things served only, in such a circumstance, to harden their hearts; as tempered steel gathers strength from the furnace and the hammer.

Judas repents; he confesses his crime; he throws away the reward of his guilt; yet was there nothing of godly sorrow in all this. Despairing, he becomes his own executioner; and flies to death, and to hell, as a refuge from the rage and fury of an awakened conscience. Fatal expedient! thus to seal his own damnation. But the righteous judgment of God erected him as a monument of wrath, and verified our Saviour's declaration, *It had been good for that man if he had never been born.* Tremble, O our souls, at this thought, that Judas, even one of the twelve, should fall into such depths of sin and ruin. May we each of us be jealous over ourselves! and may we never presume to censure whole bodies of men for the fault of particular members, when we find there was a traitor and reprobate among the holy band of the apostles.

We see the restless and implacable malice of Christ's enemies, which pursued him even to his tomb, and there endeavoured to blast his memory, by fixing upon him the character of an impostor. They demanded, and procured a guard for his sepulchre. And here also we have a repeated instance of God's taking the wise in their own craftiness. The seal and the guard served only more fully to attest the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, which they were set to overthrow, and to grace the triumph they were intended to oppose. Thus shall all the rage, and all the artifice of his enemies, at length promote the purposes of his glory: thus shall *meat* at length come out of the eater, and *sweetness* out of the strong. *The wrath of man, O Lord, shall praise thee; and the remainder of it shalt thou restrain, and shalt triumph over it, either by thy grace, or by thy vengeance.*

SECTION CXCV.

Christ rising from the dead, the guards flee away in astonishment; and he makes his first appearance to Mary Magdalene. MATT. xxviii. 1—4. MARK xvi. 1—4. LUKE xxiv. 1, 2, 12. JOHN xx. 1—17.

AND in the evening when the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, again consulted about embalming the body of Jesus, and bought more spices and aromatic drugs, that they might go and anoint him with them. And very early in the morning, as it began to dawn towards

the first day of the week, they went to take a view of the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared. And some *others* went with them. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone for us from the door of the sepulchre? For it was very large. And behold, there was, *before they arrived*, a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descending from heaven, had approached and rolled away the stone from the door, and sat down upon it. And his countenance was like lightning, and his garment white as snow. And the guards trembled for fear of him, and became like dead men. *But quickly after*, seeing the sepulchre open, they fled.* And Mary Magdalene, *advancing before the rest*, saw that the stone was taken away from the sepulchre†. And *when they came to the place they also looked*, and found the stone rolled away *o [and the body removed]*. She therefore runs *back to the city*, and comes to Simon Peter, and to that other disciple whom Jesus loved; and says to them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. And Peter arose, and that other disciple, (*John*) and went out and came to the sepulchre. And they both ran together; and that other disciple, *being the younger man*, out-ran Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And stooping down *to look into it*, he saw the linen clothes lying, but he did not *at first* enter in. Then came Simon Peter, following him, and having stooped down *to look*, he went into the sepulchre, and saw the linen clothes, laid by themselves, and the napkin which was about his head, not laid with *[them,]* but folded up in a place by itself. Then that other disciple who came first to the sepulchre went in also; and he saw and believed. For hitherto they did not know the scripture *to which Jesus had often referred them*, that he must rise from the dead. Then both the disciples went away again to their companions *in the city*; Peter especially, wondering in himself at what had happened. But Mary, *who was now returned*, stood near the sepulchre, after Peter and John were gone, weeping without; and as she wept she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre: And *there she saw two angels in the form of men*, in white, sitting, one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid. And they said to her, Woman, why dost thou weep? She said to them, because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And as she had said this, she turned back, and saw Jesus *himself* standing *near her*: and she knew not *at first* that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said to her, Woman, why dost thou weep? and whom dost thou seek? She supposing him to be the gardener, said to him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast put him, and I will remove him. Jesus said to her, *in his usual way*, Mary! And turning *directly to*

* This is inferred from their not being seen by the women.

† Every attentive reader may have observed how difficult it is to form the Evangelists into one coherent story here, and to reconcile some seeming contrarieties in their accounts: nevertheless I hope, on a careful examination of this and the following sections, it will be found not impracticable. I shall not mention the very different schemes other critics have taken, nor the particular objections against them: that of Dr. Guyse, is both new and ingenious, yet not to me satisfactory.

wards him, she said to him, with transport, Rabboni! that is to say, Master! and prostrated herself at his feet to embrace them. Jesus said to her, Do not stay to embrace me now; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but, as you will have further opportunities of seeing me, go to my brethren, and say unto them, I shall shortly ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God. Upon this, he disappeared.

REFLECTIONS.

How fit is it that we should *sing unto the Lord a new song!* and with what thankful hearts should we join, on *his own day*, and on every day, to congratulate the triumph of his rising from the dead, and to rejoice in this birth-day of our hopes! Now is the justice of God amply satisfied, or the prisoner had never been released. Now is the *reproach of the cross ceased*, and turned into proportionable glory. That reproach was rolled away at once by the descending angel, who appeared, not to awaken Christ from his sleep, or to bring him a new life, for he had himself a power, whenever he pleased, to resume that which he had voluntarily resigned; but he came to add a solemn pomp to his revival, and to strike the guards with such a terror as would effectually prevent any mad attempt on this glorious Conqueror, when he was bursting the bonds in which he had for a while been held.

O Lord, we acknowledge the truth of thy promise: *thou didst not leave his soul in hell, neither didst thou suffer the flesh of thine Holy One to see corruption. Now is Christ indeed risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.* May we, in conformity to his holy example, be dead to sin and to the world; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also may walk in newness of life! Then will he that raised up Christ from the dead, ere long quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us. Let the faith of what has been done with regard to our glorified Head, and shall at length be accomplished with respect to all his members, daily gladden our hearts. When our eyes are weeping, and our souls sinking within us, let us raise our thoughts to Jesus, our risen, and now ascended Redeemer; who says to all his brethren these gracious words (which may justly be received with transports of astonishment, and fill our hearts at the same time with joy unspeakable, and full of glory) “*I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.*”

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is now, through the death and resurrection of his dear Son (whom, by raising him from the dead, he has so solemnly owned under that relation) become *our Father and our God*. As such let us honour him, love him, and rejoice in him: and when we must leave this world, which Christ has long since left, let it delight our souls to think that we shall likewise ascend after him, and dwell with him in this propitious and divine presence. In the mean time, if we are risen with Christ, let us seek those things which are above, where Christ now sitteth at the right-hand of God; and let us be willing, in whatever sense God shall appoint, to be made conformable to his death, that we may also be partakers of his resurrection and glory.

SECTION CXCV.

The other women come to the sepulchre, Christ appears to them as they return ; but their testimony is not received by the disciples. MATT. XXVIII. 5—10. MARK xvi. 2, 5—11. LUKE XXIV. 3—11. JOHN XX. 18.

NOW when *Jesus* was risen, early on the first day of the week, [*as was before related*] he made his first appearance to *Mary Magdalene*, out of whom he had ejected seven demons. *But to return to the other women from whom she had parted, to inform Peter and John that the sepulchre was open, and who had brought the spices :* And they came together to the sepulchre about the rising of the sun. And having entered into the sepulchre, they found not the body of the Lord *Jesus*. And it came to pass, as they were in great perplexity on this account, behold they saw the two angels in the form of men in splendid habits, who came and stood by them : one of them appeared like a young man, clothed in a long white robe, who had been sitting on the right side of the entrance into the sepulchre. And they were greatly terrified at this sight ; and bowed their faces to the ground. But the angel answered and said unto the women, Do not be terrified ; for I know, that you seek *Jesus of Nazareth*, who was crucified : *But why seek ye the living among the dead ? He is not here, but is risen, as he said : Behold, where they laid him ; come, view the place where the Lord lay. Remember how he spake unto you, when he was yet in Galilee ; saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinners, and be crucified, and the third day he shall rise again. (And they remembered his words.) But go quickly, and tell his disciples, and particularly Peter, that he is risen from the dead : and behold, he is going before you into Galilee ; there ye shall all see him, as he said to you. Lo, I, who am one of the angels of God, have told you.*

And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre ; for they trembled, and were amazed ; and they said nothing to any one *by the way*, for they were affrighted ; *but with a mixture of fear and great joy*, they ran to bring his disciples word. And as they were going to tell his disciples, behold, *Jesus* met them, saying, *Hail ! I give you joy.* And they drew near, and took hold of his feet, and paid their homage to him. Then *Jesus* said to them, Be not afraid ; *but go, tell my brethren, that they go away into Galilee ; there they shall see me appear publicly among them.* And when they were returned from the sepulchre to *Jerusalem*, they told all these things to the eleven apostles, and to all the rest of the disciples. And they were *Mary Magdalene*, and *Joanna*, and *Mary the mother of James*, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles.

And *Mary Magdalene** [*to whom Jesus had first appeared, went with*

* From the particular manner in which *Mark* mentions her, in distinction from the rest, it should seem that she went *alone*, at least to some of the apostles, and that she was the first who gave them the pleasing intelligence. Something of this sort seemed necessary to be inserted above, to prevent this passage in the harmony from having the appearance of a tautology. ED.

peculiar haste and zeal, on this pleasing errand] and told the disciples that had been *so constantly* with him, as they were mourning and weeping, that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her. And when they heard that he was alive, and had been seen by her, *and by the other women (who had also testified the same)* they did not believe it; but their words seemed to them as an idle tale.

REFLECTIONS.

We are now again called, as by the angel's voice, *to come and see the place where the Lord lay*, and to take an affectionate survey of that sepulchre which our rising Saviour had left, and where he had laid aside the dress of death, as a token that he should return to it no more. How wonderful that he should ever have lain there! That the Lord of life should have dwelt among the dead, and from the glory of the throne of God, should have sunk down to the abasement of the grave! But he has burst its prison-doors, and has *abolished death, and him who had the power of it*; abolished it for himself and us. How are all its terrors now disarmed! *O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!*

With what pleasure did the angels deliver this gracious message of their Lord as well as ours! and with what transport did the pious women receive it! Behold the tender care of Christ over his people! Angels have it immediately in charge to send the glad tidings to his disciples; and Jesus repeats and confirms them. *Go tell my brethren, I am risen from the dead.* Lord! is this thy language concerning those who but a few hours before had forsaken thee! and one of them, with such dreadful imprecations, denied thee! Yet even that disciple is not excluded; nay, to him it is peculiarly addressed; *go tell thy brethren*, and in particular tell *Peter*, that he, poor mourner, may especially be comforted. Compassionate Redeemer! Thou hast brought up from the tomb with thee that tenderness and goodness which laid thee there! Such is the freedom and glory of thy grace, that thou sometimes dost first manifest thyself to those who were once in the most miserable bondage to Satan. Whenever this is the case, may the peculiar obligation be remembered! May every remainder of unbelief be subdued in our souls! and may we joyfully communicate to all around us the tidings of a **RISEN SAVIOUR**, and the merciful discoveries of his presence to us!

SECTION CXCVI.

The guards make their report to the chief priests, and are bribed. MATT. xxviii. 11—15. *Christ appears to two of the disciples.* MARK xvi. 12, 13.

MATT. xxviii.

- 11 **N**OW while the women were going to tell the disciples what they had heard and seen, behold some of the guards, who had fled from the sepulchre, came into the city, and told the chief
12 priests all that had happened. And having met together with the elders of the people, and consulted among themselves what they

should do ; having no proof of negligence or treachery in the guards, they resolved to pass over the affair, and endeavour to pervert their evidence : they therefore gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, *If any should question you, and pretend that this Jesus is risen, say ye that his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this should be heard by the governor, and he should blame you for sleeping, we will persuade him, and make you secure. And they took the money, and did as they were taught. And this story is commonly reported among the Jews even to this day.*

MARK XVI.

12 And after this report of the women to the disciples, concerning Christ's resurrection (having first appeared to Peter*) he appeared also on the same day, to two others of them in another form, (or in a different habit from what he ordinarily wore) as they were walking on the way, and going into the country to a neighbouring village. And they went back directly and told it to the rest of their companions ; yet they did not immediately believe them.—*A more particular account of which important facts will be given hereafter.*

REFLECTIONS.

Surely there is nothing in the whole sacred story which does in a more affecting manner illustrate the deplorable hardness of the human heart in this degenerate state, than the portion of it which is now before us. What but the testimony of an apostle could have been sufficient to persuade us, that men who had been but a few hours before the witnesses of such an awful scene, who had beheld the angel descending, had felt the earth trembling, and had seen the sepulchre bursting open by a divine power, and had fallen down in helpless astonishment and confusion, perhaps expecting every moment to be themselves destroyed, should that very day, yea, that very morning, suffer themselves to be hired, *by a sum of money*, to do their utmost to asperse the character of Christ, and to invalidate the evidence of his resurrection, of which they were in effect eye-witnesses? Nay, how astonishing is it, that the *chief priests* themselves, the public ministers of the Lord of hosts, could act such a part as this! They hear this full evidence that he, that Jesus whom they had murdered, was *risen from the dead* ; and they well knew and remembered that he had himself put the proof of his mission on this very fact ; a fact to which the prodigies at his death, which they themselves had seen and felt, added an inexpressible weight of probability. Who would not have expected that they should have been alarmed, convinced, and humbled ; that they should have turned the remaining days of the passover into a public fast, and have solicitously sought out him who was so powerfully declared to be the son of God, to cast

* Though the evangelists have not recorded the particular circumstances of our Lord's appearance to *Peter*, yet it is evident that he appeared to him before he was seen by the rest of the apostles. Compare 1 Cor. xv. 5. and Luke xxiv. 34.

themselves at his feet, and entreat his pardon and grace?—But instead of this, with invincible and growing malice, they set themselves to oppose him, and *bribe the soldiers* to testify a lie, the most to his dishonour of any that hell could invent. And surely, had not Christ been kept out of their sight and power, they would, notwithstanding all this, have endeavoured to bring him down to the tomb again, on the very same principles on which they would have slain *Lazarus* after his resurrection. So true does it appear, in this renewed and unequalled instance, that *if men hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

No question but these very men, when pressed with the evidences of Christ's resurrection, answered, as succeeding infidels have presumptuously done, "that he should have appeared to them, if he expected they should believe he was risen." But what assurance can we have that the same prejudices which overbore the testimony of the soldiers, might not also have resisted even the appearance of Christ himself? Or, rather, that the obstinacy which led them to overbear conscience in one instance, might not have done it in the other? Justly therefore did God deny what wantonness, and not reason, might lead them to demand: justly did he give them up to dishonour their own understandings, as well as their moral character, by this mean and ridiculous tale, which brought men to testify what was done *while they were asleep*. The most that common sense could make of their report, had they deserved the character of honest men, would have been, that they knew nothing of the matter. And we have a thousand times more reason to admire the condescension of God, in sending his apostles to these wicked rulers with such additional proofs and messages, than to censure his providence in preventing Christ's public appearance. May he deliver us from the treachery and corruption of our own hearts! May he give us a holy tenderness and integrity of soul, that we may see truth wheresoever it is, and may follow it whithersoever it leads us; lest God should *choose our delusions*, and give us up in his righteous judgment to *believe a lie*, and to think ourselves wise in that *credulous infidelity* which is destroying its ten thousands amongst us!

SECTION CXCVII.

A fuller account of Christ's appearance to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. LUKE xxiv. 13—33.

13 **A**ND behold, two of them were travelling that very day, *on which Jesus rose*, to a village called Emmaus, which was about
 14 sixty furlongs* from Jerusalem. And they discoursed together
 15 of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that
 as they talked, and argued together, Jesus also himself drew near,
 16 and travelled on with them. But their eyes were so restrained
 17 that they did not know him. And he said to them, What are these

* Or rather more than seven miles.

matters which you are conferring upon between yourselves, as you
 18 walk, and appear with a sorrowful countenance? And one of the
two, whose name was Cleopas, answered and said to him, Are you
 the only person that sojourns in Jerusalem, and is unacquainted
 19 with the things which have been done there in these days? And he
 said to them, What things? And they said to him, Those
 that relate to Jesus the Nazarene; a man who was a prophet, pow-
 20 erful in actions and in words, before God and all the people: And
 how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to a sentence of
 21 death, and crucified him. But we hoped that he had been the *Messiah*,
 the person who should have delivered Israel. And besides
 all these occurrences, this is now the third day since these things
 22 were done. Indeed some women of our society, have greatly sur-
 23 prised us, who were early at the sepulchre, and not having found
 his body *there*, came and said that they also saw a vision of angels,
 24 who affirmed him to be alive. And some men who were with us,
 went to the sepulchre, and found *it* even so as the women had said;
 but him they did not see.
 25 And he said to them, O thoughtless *creatures*, and slow of heart
 26 to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary
 that the Messiah should suffer these things, and so should enter
 27 into his glory? And beginning from Moses, and [going through]
 all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things concerning him
 28 in all the scriptures.—And they drew near to the village whither
 they were travelling; and he seemed as if he were going further;
 29 but they compelled him, saying, continue with us, for it is towards
 evening, and the day declines. And he went in to continue with
 30 them. And it came to pass, as he sat down to table with them, he
 took bread, and blessed, and brake, and gave *it* to them, as he had
 31 been used to do. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him,
 32 and he suddenly withdrew himself from before them. And they
 said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he was
 talking to us by the way, and while he was opening the scriptures
 33 to us? And they rose up that very hour, and returned to Jerusalem.

REFLECTIONS.

How delightful a close of so melancholy a day to these pious *travellers*! A day surely long to be remembered by them and by us! They were on a journey; but they did not amuse themselves on it with any trifling subject of discourse. Their *hearts* were set upon *Christ*, and therefore their tongues were employed in speaking of him. And behold, *Christ himself*, the dear theme of their discourse, makes one among them; he enlightens their eyes, and warms their hearts, and at length makes himself known to them in the breaking of bread.

So may we often be speaking of *Christ*, from the fulness of our hearts, when we go out, and when we come in! So may he still, in some degree, join himself with us in spirit, guiding our souls into divine knowledge, and animating them with holy love!

They bear an honourable and a just testimony to that great *Prophet* whom God had raised up for them as mighty before him both in word

and in deed. But they knew not how to see through so dark a cloud : their hopes were almost extinguished, and they could only say, *We trusted this had been he that should have redeemed Israel.* Pitiableness ! Yet too just an emblem of the temper which often prevails in the pious mind ; when the *Christian* is ready to give up all, if deliverance does not proceed just in the method he expected. Yet was *Christ* even then delivering *Israel* in the most glorious and effectual manner, by those very sufferings which gave them such distress. *Verily thou art the God of Israel, and the Saviour, when thou art a God that hidest thyself from us.*

In faithful friendship, and with a plainness well becoming his office, the compassionate Redeemer upbraids them with their *slowness of heart to believe* these things, when they had received *line upon line, precept upon precept*, concerning them. How justly do we fall under such a rebuke in many instances ! Let us then humbly say, *Lord, increase our faith !*

We should reasonably have thought ourselves *happy* in an opportunity of hearing or reading *this discourse of Jesus*, in which he threw such lustre on the *prophecies* of the *Old Testament*, and proved that, according to the tenor of them, it was *necessary that the Messiah should thus suffer, and so enter into his glory.* As providence has denied us this satisfaction, let us however improve this general and very important hint, that *Moses and all the prophets speak of these things.* Let us delight to trace the heavenly beam from its earliest dawn, and to observe how it grew *brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.* May the blessed *Spirit*, by whom those mysterious *predictions* were inspired, so direct our inquiries, that every *veil* may be taken off from our eyes, that we may see *Jesus* in the *Old Testament* as well as in the *New* ; and see him in *both* with that lively fervour of holy affection which may cause *our hearts to burn within us !* And oh, that we may especially find that, when we surround *his table*, he *makes himself known to us in the breaking of bread*, in such a manner, as to fill our souls with all joy, as well as peace in believing !

SECTION CXCVIII.

The two disciples return to the apostles ; and Jesus appears to them the evening after his resurrection. MARK XVI. 14. LUKE XXIV. 33—43. JOHN XXI. 19—23.

AND when the two disciples came back to Jerusalem, they found the eleven apostles assembled, and others with them who eagerly addressed them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon. And they (the two travellers) then recounted the things which had happened to themselves, in the way to Emmaus ; and how he was known by them in the breaking of bread*.—Then on the evening of the same day, which was the first day of the week, when the doors of the room, where the disciples were gathered together, were shut

* MARK, " And quickly afterwards [as they were speaking of these things] while they were sitting at supper, *Jesus himself* appeared to the eleven."

and fastened for fear of the Jews, Jesus himself came in, and stood in the midst of them, and said to them, Peace be unto you. But they were amazed and terrified, and suspected that they saw a spirit. And he said to them, Why are you troubled, and why do suspicions arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, to convince you that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me have. And saying this, he shewed them his hands and his feet, and his side.—The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord. And when they * as yet believed not for joy, and were astonished, he said to them, Have you any food here left? And they gave him part of a broiled fish and of an honeycomb. And taking it, he eat before them, that they might be fully satisfied that he had a real body. And he upbraided them for their unbelief, and the hardness of their hearts, that they had not believed those who had seen him since he was risen. Then Jesus said to them again, Peace be unto you: As my Father sent me, so also I send you as my ambassadors to the children of men. And saying this, he breathed upon them, and said to them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit. Whose soever sins you remit, or declare forgiven, they are remitted to them; and whose soever sins you retain, or pronounced unpardoned, they are retained, and their guilt lies upon them.

REFLECTIONS.

With pleasure let us echo back the words of the apostles, and join in that glad anthem which so well suits a resurrection-day, *The Lord is risen, he is risen indeed.* We owe our daily praises to God for the abundant demonstration he has given us of so important a fact, for every appearance of Christ to his disciples, and for all the infallible tokens by which he shewed himself to be alive after his passion. He came with peace and blessings in his mouth; he came to disperse their fears, and to assure them of his forgiving love. How strong were those prejudices which so hardly yielded to such convincing proofs! And how rich was that grace which condescended to overcome them!

Christ breathed on the apostles, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. May he also breathe on our souls, and fill us with that glorious and divine gift, which, if it qualified the apostles for their extraordinary office, may much more furnish us for the common duties of life! May we try our state by the characters which they have laid down in their inspired writings: in which sense, among others, we may assure ourselves, that, if they have declared *our sins to be remitted, they are remitted*: and, if indeed they are so, we need not be much concerned by whom they are retained. Vain and arrogant men may claim a despotic power, which God never gave, and which these words are far from implying. But, whatsoever be the sentence they may pass, *they whom God blesseth, are blessed indeed.* May we always esteem it a very small thing to be judged of man's judgment; pitying, rather than resenting, the rashness of those who claim any such discretionary sacerdotal power as can give the real penitent any alarm, or the impenitent any encouragement to continue in sin!

* The author substitutes [some of them] but it seemed right to give the word which the evangelist uses. Ep.

SECTION CXCIX.

Christ appearing to the eleven a second time, offers to Thomas, who was before absent, the most sensible proofs of his resurrection. JOHN XX. 24—29.

24 **B**UT Thomas, one of the twelve disciples, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came; *in the evening of the day on*
 25 *which he rose.* The other disciples therefore told him, *with joy,*
We have seen the Lord. But he said to them, Unless I shall see
 in his hands the mark of the nails, and shall put my finger upon the
 mark of the nails, and put my hand upon the scar in his side, I will
 26 not believe. And after eight days (i. e. *on that day seven-night*)
 his disciples were again [*assembled*] within, and Thomas was with
 them. And Jesus came *to them again,* the doors being shut *as be-*
fore; and he stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you!
 27 Then he said to Thomas, Reach thy finger hither, and behold my
 hands; and reach thine hand, and put it on my side; and be not
 28 incredulous but believe. And Thomas answered and said to him,
 29 My Lord, and my God*! Jesus says to him, Thomas, thou hast be-
 lieved because thou hast seen me: *but still more happy are they*
who have not seen, and yet have believed.

REFLECTIONS.

We most evidently see in this instance of *Thomas*, as well as in many
 circumstances of the story mentioned above, how far the apostles were
 from being rashly credulous in the important fact of Christ's resurrec-
 tion. It is apparent, they erred in the contrary extreme; yet our gra-
 cious Lord condescended to satisfy scruples which were carried to an
 extravagance. He renewed his visit, and at the same time renewed
 his salutation too. *Peace be unto you* was still his language; nor did
 he only speak, but act, as one who wished it, and was determined to
 give it. What peace must it administer to the mind of this good man
 when his Lord said, *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and*
reach hither thine hand, and put it on my side; and be not faithless, but
believing! Evidently did he hereby shew, not only that he was risen
 from the dead, but that he circumstantially knew those events which
 had passed in his bodily absence, and needed not human information.
 Let us then ever behave ourselves as in the presence of Christ. Let
 us act, and speak, and think, in such a manner as may bear his inspec-
 tion; and, struck with these united demonstrations of wisdom, power,
 and grace, let us prostrate ourselves before him, and say, *Our Lord,*
and our God! thus honouring the Son as we honour the Father, and
 adoring the indwelling Deity through this veil of flesh, in which it has
 been pleased to enshrine itself, and kindly to attemper, though not en-
 tirely to conceal, its rays.

Though we have not those sensible manifestations which were
 granted to *Thomas*, let it suffice us that the apostles were the appoint-
 ed witnesses of all these things; and *what they saw with their eyes, and*
their hands handled of the word of life, that have they declared unto us.

* The argument arising from these words in proof of the Deity of our bles-
 sed Lord, cannot be evaded by saying that they are only a *exclamation of*
surprise, for it is declared he spoke these words to him.

Let us thankfully receive so convincing a testimony. Let us shew an upright and candid mind in accepting such evidence as the wisdom of God has seen fit to give us ; remembering that a truly rational faith is the more acceptable to God, in proportion to the difficulties which it is able to surmount ; and that there are peculiar blessings in store for them *who have not seen, and yet have believed.*

SECTION CC.

Christ discovers himself to Peter and other disciples at the sea of Tiberias, while they were fishing. JOHN xxi. 1—14.

- 1 **S**OME time after these things, Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples, at the sea of Tiberias ; and *the manner in*
 2 *which he now manifested himself to them was thus :* Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, and the *two sons* of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples, were together in Galilee ; *whither they were returned by Christ's*
 3 *direction.* Simon Peter says to them, I *will* go a fishing : They say to him, We also *will* go with thee. They went out *therefore*, and immediately took ship, and that night they
 4 caught nothing. And when the morning was now come, Jesus stood upon the shore ; nevertheless the disciples knew not that
 5 it was Jesus. Then Jesus said to them, Have you any thing to
 6 eat, *my lads* ? They answered him, No. And he said to them, Throw the net on the right side of the ship, and you will find *some*. They threw *the net* therefore, and now they were not able to draw
 7 it, on account of the multitude of fishes.—Then that disciple whom Jesus loved, says unto Peter, It is the Lord. Simon Peter therefore hearing *that* it was the Lord, girded on his coat (for he was naked, *excepting his under garment*) and threw himself into the
 8 sea and *swam to shore*. And the other disciples came with the boat, drawing the net *full* of fishes ; for they were not far from
 9 the land, but about two hundred cubits. As soon as they came ashore, they saw a fire of burning coals, and fish laid upon it, and
 10 bread *prepared*. Jesus said to them, Bring *some* of the fish which
 11 you have now taken. Simon Peter went aboard, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty-three ; and
 12 though they were so many the net was not broke.—Jesus said to them, Come, and refresh yourselves. And none of the disciples presumed to ask him, Who art thou ? knowing that it was the Lord, *though he conversed with them in a more distant manner than*
 13 *usual*. Jesus then came and took bread, and gave it them ; and
 14 likewise *some of the fishes*.—This was now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to *such a number* of his disciples, after he was risen from the dead.

REFLECTIONS.

Christ first called these disciples when they were employed in the duties of their proper profession in life, and he now manifests himself to them while they were so engaged ; perhaps particularly

intending thereby to encourage an honest industry, in which indeed we are far more likely to enjoy his presence, and to converse with him, than when we throw away our time in idleness and inactivity. A while he leaves them to labour in vain, that when the plentiful draught of fishes came, it might be the more remarkable. Sometimes he may deal thus with his ministers, in their endeavours to catch men ; that we may be convinced thereby, to whose power we owe our success, and may not sacrifice to our own *net*, or *burn incense to our own drag*.

All the disciples rejoiced at his appearance ; but *Peter* was the foremost to cast himself at his feet. Conscious that so much had been forgiven him, he is solicitous to shew that he *loves much*. So may the remembrance of our miscarriages work upon us, to make us more vigorous in Christ's service, and to inspire us with such zeal and affection as *many waters may not be able to quench, nor the floods to drown !*

Let us not imagine this miracle was merely intended for a demonstration of Christ's divine power over all that *passeth through the paths of the sea* ; it was also the work of wisdom and bounty. By the sale of so many large and fine fishes a seasonable provision was made for the subsistence of his disciples at Jerusalem, while they were there *waiting for the descent of the Spirit*. Let every circumstance of this kind encourage us to trust him, as the Lord of nature and of grace, who will withhold from us no necessary supply of either, while we are making it our humble and faithful care to promote his glory.

SECTION CCI.

Christ questions Peter about his love to him, renews his commission, and prophesies concerning his death. JOHN xxi. 15—24.

- 15 **W**HEN therefore they had made a meal, Jesus said to Simon, Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, dost thou love me more than these *thy brethren do* ? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus said to him, Feed my lambs. He says to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, dost thou indeed love me ? He answers him *as before*, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus says to him, Feed my sheep. He says to him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, Dost thou love me ? Peter was grieved, that he said to him the third time, Dost thou love me ? And he said to him, Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus says to him, Feed my sheep.
- 18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou didst gird thyself, and walk about whithersoever thou wouldst ; but when thou art grown old, thou shalt stretch out thine hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This he said signifying by what kind of death he should glorify God. And having said this, he *further* says to him, Follow me.
- 20 And Peter turning about, saw that *other* disciple whom Jesus loved, *silently* following him ; (the same who reclining at his breast

- 21 at supper, said, Lord, who is it that will betray thee? Peter seeing him follow his Master, says unto Jesus, Lord, what shall this
 22 man do? Jesus says to him, If I will that he tarry, or continue alive,
 23 till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me. This saying therefore went abroad among the brethren, that this disciple should not die; but it was a mistake for Jesus did not say to him; that he should not die; but only, If I will that he tarry till I come.
 24 what is that to thee?—This is the disciple who testifies concerning these things, and hath written them; and we know that his testimony is true.

REFLECTIONS.

What if our Lord Jesus Christ should put the same question to us that he did to *Peter*, in this remarkable passage, and should thus repeat it again and again? Are there none of us who should be at a loss for an answer? None of us to whom he might say, *I know that you have not the love of Christ in you?*—Or are there none of us who apprehend, that, if we had ourselves been thus pressed, we could, at the very best, only have said, *Lord, thou that knowest all things, knowest that I cannot tell whether I love thee or not?*—Blush, and be confounded, O my soul, if thou must reply with such uncertainty to a question of so great importance, and in a case where all the ardour of the heart might be so justly expected?—But are there not still some of us who through divine grace could reply with pleasure, *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that, notwithstanding all the unallowed and lamented infirmities of our lives, we do indeed love thee?*—And, if we are thus really conscious to ourselves of such an unfeigned affection, let it be our daily joy, that he who implanted this divine principle in our hearts, discerns and sees it there; and, *knowing all things*, he perfectly knows this, however we may be suspected, however we may be censured.

Let us learn also by what method we are to express our love, according to our ability and opportunity; even by *feeding his sheep*, and promoting the interest and edification of his church. Let Ministers especially do it; and let them not forget those dear creatures, *the lambs of the flock*. Jesus the compassionate *Shepherd*, as we see, did not forget them; but taught his servants with the greatest tenderness, both by his precepts; and by his example, to *gather them in their arms, and carry them in their bosom*. Happy are those ministers who, instead of indulging a vain curiosity in things wherein they are not at all, or but very little concerned, are spending their lives in such faithful services; *feeding the flock of God*; and *taking the oversight of it, not by constraint, but willingly*; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; that when the chief Shepherd shall appear, they may receive an unfading crown of glory: A crown which will infinitely more than repay, not only their labours, but their sufferings too!

Happy *Peter*, who, having worn out his better years in the service of Christ, courageously stretched out his aged arms to be bound, and, being borne away to tortures and death, shed the last slow ebb of his blood as a martyr for him who had loved him and given himself for

him.—And not less happy the beloved disciple, so willing to hazard his life in the same cause; though he was not in fact called to lay it down as a martyr! Our gracious Lord, who sees every purpose, and every affection, as it rises in the heart, favourably *accepts of the willing mind*, and will, through the riches of his grace, entitle them to the reward of equal suffering, who have waited with a like readiness, though they have not been called out to the severity of the like trial.

SECTION CCH.

Christ appears to the whole body of the disciples in Galilee; and afterwards meets the apostles at Jerusalem. MATT. XXVIII. 16, &c. MARK XVI. 15—18. LUKE XXIV. 44—49*.

NOW, the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to a certain mountain where Jesus had appointed to meet them; and [with them a great number†] who came together from all parts of the country. And having seen him, they worshipped him, though some of them had doubted.

And Jesus *afterwards* came to his disciples repeatedly at Jerusalem, and on one of these occasions‡, spake to them saying, These are the words which I spake to you while I was yet among you, that all the things must be fulfilled which are written concerning me in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms. At the same time he opened their minds, that they might understand the scriptures. And he said to them *o*, Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary that the Messiah should suffer and should rise again from the dead on the third day: and that on this great foundation the doctrines of repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. For all authority is now given unto me in heaven and on earth. And you shall be witnesses of these things. And behold, to qualify you for that office, I send upon you the promise of my Father, the miraculous effusion of the Holy Spirit. But do you continue in the city of Jerusalem till you are invested with this power from on high. And he further said to them, Go forth into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who believeth

* In this and the following section, the author introduces some passages from Acts i. to complete the account of Christ's resurrection. But as they are repeated in their proper places, in the translation and paraphrase of the book of Acts, it is presumed no reader will disapprove their being here omitted; especially as that book is included in this volume.

† The author, in his paraphrase, here introduces the words of Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 6. *And he was seen by above 500 brethren at once.* It is most probable, but not certain, that it was on this occasion.—In the translation "Some HAD doubted," the Tense is changed.

‡ The time when the following discourse was delivered is not ascertained, but it seems plain that it was a few days before our Lord's ascension. I have thrown all that the three evangelists relate together, though perhaps some parts of it might be delivered at different times.

|| C. T. "And ye are witnesses."—So. C. "And be ye witnesses." W.

not shall be condemned. Go forth therefore and proselyte all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am always with you, even to the end of the world. Amen!

And, *he further added*, these signs shall follow them that believe*: in my name they shall cast out demons; they shall speak in new languages; they shall take up serpents *without being bitten*; and if they drink any deadly poison it will not hurt them: and they shall lay their hands on the sick and they shall recover.

REFLECTIONS.

With how ill a grace could the Jews complain of any deficiency in the evidence of our Lord's resurrection, when he appeared alive to so great a number as *five hundred at once*! How glad must these disciples be *when they saw the Lord*! and with what pleasure must they hear him *speaking of those things which concerned the kingdom of God*.

We have surely perpetual reason for thankfulness, when we think of that commission which Christ gave [them]: nor is it a circumstance of little importance, that they had it in charge, when they published this message of grace, to *begin at Jerusalem*; though the religious opportunities that were abused by that ungrateful city had already been so great, and their provocations so many. Amazing condescension of the *Prince of peace*, that he sent his ambassadors of peace to them when they had hardly laid aside the weapons with which they had slain him, and were scarce rested after the cruel fatigue which their officious malice had given them in abetting his murder! Behold, he offers them all the invaluable blessings purchased by his blood, while it was yet, as we may say, warm upon mount Calvary! and on the same principles, even unto this day, *where sin hath abounded, there is grace abounding much more*.—The commission he gave his apostles, though it *began at Jerusalem*, did not end there; nor was it confined within the narrow limits of Judea; but they were appointed to *go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*. We to this day, in our remote land, enjoy the benefit of it. Let us remember the important consequences that will one way or another attend the gospel thus brought us. *If we believe it, we shall be saved; but if we believe it not, we shall be damned*. Life, or death, O my soul, is the certain issue of it, with regard to thee in particular. *Be surety to thy servant, O Lord, for good; and let my life be precious in thy sight!*

¶ Christ opened the understanding of the apostles, to apprehend the sense of scripture. Let us study that sacred book with an humble dependence upon the aid of that blessed Spirit by whom it was dictated. And let these apostles who were thus divinely taught, be reverently regarded as our surest guides, when we are studying the

* The faith here intended must be different from that mentioned before, and must refer to that which respects the inward motions of the Spirit, exciting to miraculous operations. [See *Matt. xxi. 22. § 151.*]

oracles of the Old Testament : considering the extraordinary commission with which Christ sent them forth, the *power from on high* with which he invested them, and the ample credentials which he thereby gave them. These miraculous donations are now ceased, but that valuable promise still continues in force, *That he will be with his ministers always, even unto the end of the world.* In the strength of that gracious assurance, O thou *faithful and true Witness*, would thine humble ambassadors still go forth to all the labours and difficulties before them : *remember thy word unto thy servants, and may it be unto us according to it ! Amen !*

SECTION CCHII.

Christ ascends to heaven in the sight of his disciples from the mount of Olives. MARK XVI. 19, &c. LUKE XXIV. 50, &c. JOHN XX. 30. XXI. 25.

AND *Jesus having thus conversed with his disciples at Jerusalem,* he led them out to the mount of Olives, and brought them as far as the boundaries of Bethany. And lifting up his hands, he blessed them. And it came to pass, after the Lord had spoken to them, that while he was blessing them he was *miraculously* separated from them, and carried up into heaven, and *there he sat down* at the right hand of God. And they worshipped him, and *then* returned to Jerusalem with great joy ; and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.

And a few days after, their ascended Lord, in remembrance of his promise, sent down the extraordinary influences of his Spirit upon them ; and going forth they preached the gospel every where ; the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs which followed it. Amen.

Thus ends the history of Jesus Christ during his abode on earth. And it is but a brief narrative, for there are also many other things that Jesus did ; and indeed many other signs and miracles which he wrought, in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book, which if every one of them should be fully recorded, I am persuaded the world itself would not receive the books that should be written. But these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life through his name.*

REFLECTIONS.

Thus did our victorious Saviour *ascend on high, and lead captivity captive : the chariots of God* which attended him were *twenty thousand, even thousands of angels ;* and being *gone into heaven,* he is there seated on the right hand of God ; *angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject to him.* Let us his humble followers *look after him*

* The very size of the volumes would prevent the generality of mankind from procuring or reading them.—Though it might be admitted, as most expositors suppose, that this is an *Hyperbole* (like Gen. xi. 4. Numb. xiii. 33. and John xii. 19.) this seems an easier sense, and better suited to John's plainness of style.

with holy joy and pleasing expectation ; congratulating his triumphs, and trusting through his grace to share them. Like the apostles, let us bow down and worship him ; and, while we continue here below, let us make it our daily labour and care to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. And instead of amusing ourselves with the vain dreams of temporal grandeur and felicity, or with curious inquiries after those times and seasons which the Father has reserved in his own power, let us apply with vigour and zeal to that business which he has assigned us ; labouring to the utmost to promote his gospel, and, by a diligent improvement of our time and opportunities, to prepare for his final appearance, when the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with more public splendor than he returned thither, and shall come in the glory of his Father, and his own glory, with a majestic pomp which every eye shall see, and with the sound of a trumpet, which even all the nations of the dead shall hear.

In the mean time, let us thankfully own his gracious presence with his disciples, whom he left behind him ; and with admiring gratitude reflect upon the happy consequences of that presence, in the establishment of the gospel in the world ; and the transmission of it even unto us, in so remote an age and country. Let us especially praise him for these sacred records which contain such an authentic and exact account of those important facts in which we are all so nearly concerned ! records incomparably more valuable than the writings of our private estates, or the charters of our public liberties. Let us earnestly pray, that their great design may be answered in us ; and make it our importunate request to Him who is the giver of all grace, that through the operations of that Holy Spirit, without the influence of which even scripture itself, with all our advantages for understanding and improving it, will be but a sealed book ; or a dead letter, our faith may be nourished and confirmed by every portion of it which we read ; and that our hearts may be so delivered into the mould of his word, that believing on Christ under all the characters he bears, we may have life through his name ; and may at length receive the end of our faith, in the complete salvation of our souls, through him ; to whom with the Father, and the eternal Spirit, be undivided honours, and everlasting praises. Amen, and Amen !

[Here ends the second volume of the original work.]

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

THIS Book was undoubtedly written by the Evangelist LUKE, whom Paul styles the beloved Physician, being addressed to Theophilus, to whom he had dedicated his GOSPEL, of which this may be considered as the second part. This may account for his name not being prefixed. The former part contains the history of Christ: this of the Apostles, after his ascension. We have here an account of the origin and growth of the church in Judea, and of the propagation and success of the Gospel in the Gentile nations. Here we have a particular narrative of the journeys and voyages of the apostle Paul, whom the writer accompanied in several of them, and who speaks of him as his fellow-labourer. The book is generally supposed to have been written about the year 63 (at which time the history ends) and most probably at Rome, when he was with Paul in his own hired house. Of its genuineness there is the most ample testimony from the most ancient records.

SECTION I.

St. Luke connects this history with his gospel, by a more particular account of the ascension of Christ. Ch. i. 1—12.

THE former treatise I composed, O Theophilus, concerning all things, which Jesus began both to do, and to teach*; even to the day in which he was taken up to heaven, after he had, by the Holy Spirit, given charge to the apostles, whom he had chosen. To whom also he presented himself alive after his sufferings, with many evident testimonials; being seen by them for forty days, and speaking to them of the things concerning the kingdom of God. And having assembled them together, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which (said he) you have heard from me. For John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit within these few days.—They therefore being come together, asked him, saying, Lord, wilt thou, at this time, break the Roman yoke, and restore the kingdom to Israel? But he said to them, It is not for you to know those times, or seasons, for the fulfilment of many prophecies concerning my kingdom, which the Father hath reserved in his own power. But you shall receive power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and even to the remotest parts of the earth. And having said these things; while they beheld, he was lifted up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they were

* That is, all things from the beginning of his ministry.

- stedfastly looking up to heaven, as he went on, behold two *angels*
 11 *in the form of men, in white raiment, stood near them ; who also*
said, Ye men of Galilee, why do ye stand gazing up to heaven?
This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come
in the same manner, as you have beheld him going into heaven.
 12 *Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet,*
which is a sabbath-day's journey from Jerusalem.*

REFLECTIONS.

If we have ever seriously considered the contents of this excellent history on which we are now entering, we must surely see abundant reason to adore that gracious Providence which hath transmitted it to us, to confirm our faith, and animate our hope in the gospel. The account of our Lord's ascension, with which it begins, relates to a fact of so great importance, that we may well bear the repetition of what we have read concerning it in the former history.

We see the apostles still dreaming of a temporal kingdom to be *restored to Israel* : So hard is it for the best of men to be entirely *crucified to the world, even by the cross of Christ* ! Our Lord does not set himself at large, to combat that error ; nor is it necessary that we should be eagerly solicitous on the like occasions, where mistakes do not affect men's characters, or their eternal state. Prudently does he direct them to wave the indulgence of their curiosity. Let us learn to moderate ours, and refer *times and seasons* to him *who hath reserved them in his own power*. Let a sense of the perfect wisdom and goodness of the divine Being silence and compose us, amidst all the darkness which veils our prospects of futurity.

With the apostles let us *look up* after an *ascending Saviour*, and send our wishes and our souls *to heaven* ; where he now is, and where he must remain, till that important day in which he shall descend to the final judgment. *Behold, he then cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him* ! May we view him to our joy, and not to our terror ! and *lift up our heads* with a serenity and cheerfulness, becoming those who see the approach of their complete redemption ! In the mean time, may his cause and service be ever dear to us ! and while he is attending to our concerns in the world above, may we, with grateful and joyful alacrity, pursue that which he graciously condescends to own as his interest here upon earth.

SECTION II.

Matthias chosen to succeed Judas. Ch. i. 13, &c.

- 13 **N**OW the apostles when they were entered *into the city*, went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Mat-
 thew ; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the zealot, and Judas
 14 *the brother of James*. These all unanimously persevered in pray-
 er and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of

* That is, 2000 cubits, or about a mile. See *Josh. iii. 4*.

15 Jesus, and with his brethren. And in those days Peter, rising up in the midst of the disciples, spake *as follows* (now the number
 16 of persons together was about an hundred and twenty) : Men and brethren, it was necessary this scripture should be fulfilled, which the holy Spirit spake before, by the mouth of David, with regard
 17 to Judas, who became the guide of those that seized Jesus : for he was *once* numbered with us *apostles*, and had obtained part of
 18 this ministry. This man therefore purchased a field* with the reward of iniquity, and, *having hanged himself*, falling down on his face he burst asunder in the middle, and all his bowels were
 19 poured out : (and it was known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that that field is *to this day* called in their language, Aceldama, *that is the field of blood*.) For it is written in the book of Psalms (lxi. 25.) “ Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man inhabit
 21 it : ” and (cix. 8.) “ Let another take his office. ” It is necessary therefore, that of the men who have conversed with us, during all the time in which the Lord Jesus was going in and coming out
 22 among us, beginning from the baptism of John, even to the day in which he was taken up from us *into heaven*, one of these should be *chosen to the apostolic office*, to be made a witness with us of his
 23 resurrection.—And they set up two men, Joseph called Barsabas
 24 (who was surnamed Justus) and Matthias. And they prayed, saying, Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all, show which
 25 of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas is fallen by *his trans-*
 26 *gression*, that he might go to his own place. And they gave out their lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

REFLECTIONS.

It was wisely and well determined by the apostles, to spend this interval of time in devotion and in christian converse ; for never have we more reason to expect the communication of the *Holy Spirit* of God to us, than when we are sharing our time between the one and the other, so far as Providence affords us leisure from our secular affairs. With their devotions they properly joined a care for the future *edification of the church*, and therefore *chose another apostle*, to complete the number which our Lord had appointed.—It is dreadful to think how the vacancy happened, and by what a horrible *transgression* it was, that one of this sacred society *fell from his office*. The hand of God's righteous vengeance was heavy upon him, and brought him in a few hours to public infamy and irrecoverable destruction. So that his example, dreadful as it is, shews us at once that no *dignity of office* can secure men from sin, and that when they break through the solemn bonds of a remarkably high and eminent profession, they must expect a punishment proportionably signal.

Riches profit not in the day of wrath. The time is swiftly approaching, when *ill-gotten gain* will prove a burthen and a terror, and the

* An action is sometimes said to be done by a person who was the occasion of doing it. Gen. xlii. 38, &c.

wages of unrighteousness will appear as the price of an *Aceldama*, a field of blood ; even in that dreadful day when impenitent sinners go to their own place ; to those abodes of misery which are so properly prepared for them, and so justly assigned to them ; assigned especially to those whose business (like that of *Judas*) it was, to *treach* repentance unto others, to *show* them their transgression, and to warn them of their danger, and who were more especially obliged to have enforced their admonitions and their precepts, by the peculiar lustre of their own examples.—But the badness of the man, who in some instances may be advanced to bear the most sacred office, is not to be interpreted to the disgrace of *that office* itself. The apostles were careful to keep up the honour of theirs, by seeking out a more proper person, who might do his part towards taking away the reproach which *Judas* had brought upon it, and might approve himself a worthy witness of the resurrection of *Jesus*, on the knowledge of which depended the salvation of millions. After all, they refer the matter to the determination of *Providence*, to which they make a very instructive appeal. Let us always remember the universal and intimate inspection of the divine Being. *Thou, Lord, knowest the hearts of all !* All their treachery, and all their integrity, is manifest in thy sight : And, in persons of equal sincerity, thou discernest what renders one more fit than another, for this or that situation and service. Let it be our desire to follow *Providence* ourselves ; and let us pray, that God will set over all his churches pastors after his own heart, who may feed them with knowledge and understanding.—The lot is cast into the lap ; but (casual as the determination may seem) the whole disposal thereof is from the Lord. Let us own his hand in the determination of every circumstance which befalls us, and especially in those by which any solemn and important trust may be committed to us : And may the consideration of it be an additional engagement upon us, to discharge it with becoming diligence and entire fidelity !

SECTION III.

The descent of the Spirit upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost, with part of Peter's speech on that occasion. Ch. ii. 1—21.

- 1 **A**ND when the day of Pentecost was completely arrived, it being then the first day of the week, they were all with unanimous affection in the same place*. And on a sudden there was a sound from heaven, as of a rushing violent wind ; and it filled
- 2 all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them divided tongues, as it were of fire ; and it † rested upon
- 3 each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them a
- 4 power of expressing themselves. Now there were sojourning in Jerusalem a number of pious men, that were Jews from every na-

* The apostles and the 120 disciples.

† That is, this appearance of fire ; one bright flame in the shape of a tongue, fixing upon the head of each, emblematic of the miraculous gift.

6 tion under heaven: And when this report came abroad, the multitude gathered together and were confounded; for every one
 7 heard them speaking in his own dialect. And they were all astonished, and wondered, saying one to another, Behold, are not
 8 all these that speak, Galileans? and how *then* do we, every one of us hear them *speaking to each of us* in his own native language?
 9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and those that inhabit Mesopotamia, and Judea*, and Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, Egypt, and the parts of Africa which are about Cyrene, and the sojourners *here who are* Romans, Jews, and proselytes; those of Crete, and Arabians; we hear them speaking in
 12 our own tongues the wonderful works of God.—And they were all in amazement and perplexity, and said one to another. What
 13 can this mean? But others mocking, said, Surely these men are filled with sweet *intoxicating* wine.

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, O ye men of Judea, and all you that inhabit Jerusalem! let this be known unto you, and listen to my words: for these men are not drunk, as you suppose; since it is *but* the third hour
 16 of the day†: but this is that *great event* which was spoken of by the prophet Joel (ii. 28.) “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.
 18 Yea in those days I will pour out my spirit upon my servants, and upon my handmaids; and they shall prophesy: and I will give prodigies in heaven above, and signs upon the earth beneath;
 20 blood, and fire, and a cloud of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and illustrious day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall invoke the name of the Lord shall be saved.

REFLECTIONS.

With how much attention and delight should we read the history of this glorious event, so frequently referred to in the predictions of our Lord, and of so great importance to the christian cause; the *miraculous descent* of the *Holy Spirit*! He came down *as a mighty rushing wind*, to signify the powerful energy of his operations, whereby the whole world was to be shaken. He fell upon them in *tongues of fire*, cloven or *divided* into several parts, to denote the most celebrated effect to be immediately produced, in causing them to speak with the utmost readiness and propriety, languages they had never learnt. An astonishing miracle! which was intended, not for pomp and ostentation, but to render them capable of propagating the gospel to the most distant nations, to which the grace of God had determined to send it.—It is observable, that this divine gift fell upon

* The dialect there differing from that of *Galilee*. [Some propose *Idumæa*.]

† Nine o'clock, the hour of morning-sacrifice, before which no persons of any character tasted wine.

them while they were *unanimously gathered together* ; perhaps to intimate, that the influences of the Spirit are most to be expected where there is the greatest *unanimity*, and the greatest *devotion*. Thus did the blessed Jesus accomplish what had been foretold concerning him, that he should *baptize his disciples with the Holy Ghost, and with fire*. And surely the *sacred flame* did not only *illuminate* their minds with celestial brightness, but did also cause their whole hearts to glow with love to God and zeal for his gospel. To this purpose may he still be imparted *to us*, whether we hold public or private stations in the church ; and may our regards to him be ever most dutifully maintained : Especially may he be poured out upon the *ministers* of it, to direct them how they should *speak the wonderful things of God* ; and may their *hearers*, under his gracious energy, *gladly receive the word*.

Let us not wonder if the more *common* operations of the Spirit on men's minds be *derided* by profane ignorance and folly, when there were some, even on this glorious day, who were stupid or malicious enough to ascribe the amazing event we have been surveying, to the supposed *intoxication* of the *apostles*, and to say, they were *full of sweet wine*. But let us observe, how well Peter vindicated himself and his brethren, with words, not of satire and reproach, but of *meekness* and *sobriety*, as well as of *truth* ; shewing at once the most perfect command, both of his reason and of his temper. Justly did he apply on this occasion that celebrated *prophecy of Joel*, in which this grand event is so exactly described. Let us adore the divine goodness, which has *poured fourth the Spirit* like a refreshing dew upon his church. Let us pray that we may all receive it, in such degrees as may suit the present state of things. And let us deprecate those judgments, which the contempt of the Spirit has too evident a tendency to produce.

Justly might God have made *our land* gloomy and horrible with *blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke*. Justly might he have *turned our sun into darkness, and our moon into blood*. Let us adore his patience, that these national judgments, which are so well deserved, have been thus long withheld. But let us also remember, that *the great and notable day* is approaching, in which *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not a gospel* so gloriously attested. Then shall these *figurative* expressions be literally fulfilled. Then shall the heavenly luminaries be quenched in their orbs ; *the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all that is therein shall be burnt up* : But even then, all those that have *believed in Christ*, and with obedient love have *called upon the name of the Lord*, shall be saved with an everlasting salvation. May that be, through grace, *our happy portion* ; and may its prospects be daily brightening upon us, till it shall open in its full lustre, and shine beautiful and glorious amidst the flames of a dissolving world !

SECTION IV.

Peter's discourse to the people continued, shewing that Jesus, whom they crucified, was risen and was the true Messiah. Ch. ii. 22—36.

22 **Y**E men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a
man recommended to you by God, by powerful operations,
and wonders, and signs, which God wrought by him in the midst
23 of you, as ye yourselves also know; him you have seized, being
given up *into your hands* by the determinate counsel and fore-
knowledge of God, and by the hands of sinners, have fastened *
24 *to the cross* and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed
the pains of death, as it was impossible that he should be held
25 under it. For David saith concerning him (*Ps. xvi. 8.*) "I have
regarded the Lord as always before me; because he is at my
26 right-hand, that I might not be moved: for this reason my heart
is glad, and my tongue exulteth; moreover too, my flesh shall
27 rest in hope, that thou wilt not leave my soul in the unseen world,
28 neither wilt thou permit thine holy one to see corruption. Thou
hast made me to know the ways of life, thou wilt make me full of
29 joy with thy countenance." Men and brethren, permit me to
speak freely to you concerning the patriarch David. *You well*
know that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is among
30 us unto this day: therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God
had sworn to him with an oath, that of the fruit of his loins he
would, according to the flesh, raise up the Messiah to sit
31 on his throne; he foreseeing *this*, spake of the resurrection of
the Messiah, that his soul should not be left in the unseen world,
32 nor his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God hath raised up, of
33 which all we are witnesses: being exalted therefore to the right-
hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit
from the Father, he hath shed forth this *miraculous effusion*, which
34 you now see and hear. For David is not ascended into heaven
in the body, but he saith (*Ps. cx. 1.*) "The Lord said unto my
35 Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy
36 footstool." Let therefore all the house of Israel assuredly know,
that God hath made this Jesus, whom you crucified, Lord and
Messiah.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us firmly believe the wisdom of the *divine counsels*, and humbly adore the depths of them; according to which, without the least violation of that human freedom on which the morality of our actions depends, those events happen which the *wickedness of men* as really effects, as if Providence were wholly unconcerned in them.—Let us thankfully own the riches of *that grace which gave our Lord Jesus Christ*, to be a sacrifice for us; and then raised him triumphant from the grave, to reign, *at the right-hand of the Majesty on high, far above*

* When ye had mocked. W.

*all principality, and power, and might. In him the prophecies are accomplished : His soul was not left in hell**, nor did he so much as *see corruption in the grave*. And we may consider his resurrection as a pledge given us for our assurance, that God will not abandon us in that ruinous state. to which his righteous sentence for a while brings our bodies. He will at length *redeem them from the power of the grave* : He will *show us also the path of life*, which our Redeemer hath trodden, and, by treading, has marked out for us ; and will conduct us *to his right-hand*, where Jesus reigns, and with him *everlasting pleasure*. In him therefore *let our heart be glad*, and in him *let our tongue rejoice* ; and when it is thus employed, it will indeed be the glory of our frame. *In this hope let our flesh rest* ; nor let our faith stagger at the *promise of God*, as if any thing could be hard to Omnipotence.

In the mean time, beholding this wonderful *effusion of the Spirit*, as the blessed consequence of the ascension and exaltation of Christ, let us, with that affection which becomes his disciples, take our part in his glory and joy. Let us triumph in the thought, that God hath now said unto him, *Sit thou at my right-hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool*. And while we rejoice in the security which we have as his friends, let us pray that the blessed time may come, when every opposing power shall be brought down, and when we shall see that sight for which our eyes so long have been waiting, even *all things put under his feet*. Hasten, O Lord, that glorious day, and whatever our station or furniture is, may we be honoured as the happy instruments of doing something, whether by life or by death, in subserviency to this great design !

SECTION V.

Great numbers converted by Peter's discourse, and immediately baptized
Ch. ii. 37, &c.

- 37 **N**OW when they heard *these things*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter, and the rest of the apostles, Men
38 and brethren, what shall we do ? And Peter said unto them, Repent, and be each of you baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, in order to the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of
39 the Holy Spirit. For the promise is *made (as you see, Joel ii. 28.)* to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even as*
40 *many as the Lord our God shall call.*—And with many other words he bore his testimony, and exhorted, saying, Be ye saved
41 from this perverse generation. They therefore, who received his word with readiness, were baptized : and there were added *to the*
42 *disciples* that very day about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfast in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in
43 breaking of bread, and in prayer. And a *reverential fear* fell upon every soul ; and many miracles and signs were wrought by the
44 apostles. And all that believed were in the same place ; and they

* Sheol, the place of the dead.

45 had all things in common*: and they sold their possessions, and
 46 effects, and divided them to all, as every one had necessity. And
 they continued unanimously in the temple every day ; and break-
 ing bread from house to house, they partook of their common re-
 47 freshment with joy and simplicity of heart ; praising God, and
 having favour among all the people. And the Lord added daily
 to the church those, who were saved.

REFLECTIONS.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend ; and far more beautiful than a jewel of gold, or an ornament of fine gold, is a wise reprover on an obedient ear. Happy are they who feel such an holy compunction of soul as these penitents did ! *Salvation is come to their house, and though they sow in tears they shall reap in joy.* What reason have we for thankfulness, that when we are crying out, *What shall we do ?* the gospel gives us so ready an answer, and directs us to *faith and repentance*, as the sure way by which we may obtain *the remission of our sins*, and at length rise to *an inheritance among them that are sanctified*. Let us rejoice, that *the promise is to us, and to our seed ;* and that the important blessings of it will run down *from generation to generation*. And let all the ardour of our souls be awakened to secure these blessings, and to be saved from that ruin, in which we shall otherwise be involved with *the crooked and perverse generation* among which we live.

Glorious effect of this convincing and excellent discourse ! when *three thousand were in one day added to the church !* three thousand, who not only expressed some present good impressions and resolutions, but *continued stedfast* in the religion they had embraced, and sacrificed all their worldly interests to it. How glorious an earnest of the future success of the gospel ! How great an encouragement to the apostles, in all the difficulties they were to encounter ; and how convincing a proof to all ages of its truth ! since all these proselytes were made upon the spot, where, if it had been false, it is impossible it should have been believed by any one rational inquirer, how mean soever his capacity, or how low soever his rank in life had been.

Let us reflect with pleasure on the happy change produced in the character and state of these converts. Bitter as the first pangs of their convictions were, anguish soon yielded to delight : *Pardon of sin*, and the *hope of glory* added a relish before unknown to the supports of nature, the accommodations of life, and the endearments of friendship. Whilst their hearts were opened in sentiments of gratitude to God, who had provided a laver for their *crimson sins* which rendered them *like wool*, and *like snow* ; and to that Redeemer who had saved them by that blood which they had cruelly and impiously shed ; they were also dilated in *liberality and bounty* ; and they undoubtedly found a rich equivalent for all the worldly possessions which they resigned, in that holy joy which sprang up in their souls.

* Peculiar reasons made this community of goods eligible at that time ; but many passages shew that it was never intended for a general practice.

when the treasures of the gospel were opened to them, and dealt out with so generous a hand.—So may the kingdom of Christ spread and flourish in the souls of men ! So may that blessed time come, when through the operation of *the same Spirit* (for that Spirit is for ever the same) *nations shall be born in a day*. Let us not despair ; *the morning was glorious, and in the even-tide it shall be light*. In the mean time, let us thankfully own whatever progress Christianity may be making among us, or others, though by slow degrees ; and acknowledge, that it is the great *Lord of the church* who, by his secret but powerful influence *adds* unto its respective societies *such as shall be saved*. May the additions every where be numerous, and may the great author of all good be more thankfully owned in them all.

SECTION VI.

Peter and John cure a lame man at the temple-gate.—Ch. iii. 1—11.

- 1 **N**OW about that time Peter and John went up to the temple,
 2 at the hour of prayer, *being the ninth hour (or three in the afternoon)*. And a certain man, who had been lame from his mother's womb, was carried, whom they daily laid at the gate of the temple, which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of those that
 3 entered into the temple ; who seeing Peter and John about
 4 to go into the temple, begged to receive an alms. But Peter,
 5 with John, looking stedfastly upon him, said, Look upon us. And he fixed his eyes upon them, expecting to receive something from
 6 them. But Peter said, Silver and gold I have none ; but what I have, I give thee : In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise
 7 up, and walk. And taking him by the right-hand, he raised him up : and immediately his feet and ankle-bones were strengthened.
 8 And leaping up, he stood, and walked about, and entered with them
 9 into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And
 10 all the people saw him walking and praising God. And they knew him, that this was he, who had sat at the beautiful gate of the temple for alms ; and they were filled with astonishment and
 11 ecstasy at that which had befallen him.—And while the lame man, who was healed, kept his hold of Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in amazement to the portico called Solomon's.

REFLECTIONS.

Happy are those souls who are so formed for devotion, that the proper returning seasons of it, whether public or private, are always welcome. Doubly delightful that friendship, which, like this of Peter and John, is endeared not only by *taking sweet counsel together*, but by *going to the house of God in company* ! If we desire this devotion should be acceptable, let us endeavour not only to lay aside all the malignant passions, and to *lift up holy hands without wrath* ; but let us *stretch out our hands* in works of benevolence and kindness. To our piety let us add the most diffusive charity which our circumstances will permit ; and there are none, whose circumstances will forbid

every exercise of it. As for those that *have neither silver nor gold*, such as they have *let them give*.—These holy apostles, we see, had not enriched themselves by being intrusted with the *distribution of those goods* which were *laid at their feet* ; but had approved themselves *faithful stewards* : The members of Christ were far dearer to them than any temporal interest of their own ; and fatally, sure, would the church in all ages have been mistaken, if it had measured the worth of its pastors by their wealth. They bestowed nevertheless a much more valuable bounty : And if it be more desirable to *heal men's bodies* than to enrich them, how much more advantageous is it to be the instrument of *healing their souls* ? which, if it be ever accomplished, must surely be *in the same name*, even that of *Jesus of Nazareth* : May he strengthen the feeble powers of fallen nature, while we are attempting to *raise men up* ; and may spiritual health and vigour, when restored, be improved, like the cure wrought on this *lame man*, in the service of God, and a thankful acknowledgment of his goodness.

We are not to wonder, that, as *the name of Jesus*, their great deliverer, is incomparably *precious* to all that truly *believe*, such have also some peculiarly tender friendships for *the persons*, by whose means he has wrought this good work upon them : May many such friendships be formed now, and be perfected in glory ! and, in the mean time, may the ministers of Christ be watching every opportunity of doing good, and especially when they see men under any lively impressions which tend towards religion : May they have that holy mixture of zeal and prudence, which taught the apostles how to speak *a word in season* ; a word which proved so remarkably good, and was owned by God in so singular a manner, for the conversion and salvation of multitudes that heard it !

SECTION VII.

Peter's discourse in the temple, on the cure of the lame man. Ch. iii. 12, &c.

- 12 **A**ND Peter seeing *this concourse of persons attracted by this*
miracle, answered the people, Ye men of Israel, why do ye
wonder at this *cure* ? or why do ye fix your eyes on us, as if by
13 our own power, or piety, we had made this man to walk ? The
God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our
fathers, hath glorified his son Jesus, whom you delivered up, and
renounced him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determin-
14 ed to release him ; but you renounced the holy and righteous one,
15 and desired a murderer might be granted unto you ; and killed the
prince of life ; whom *nevertheless* God hath raised from the dead,
16 of which we are witnesses : and now by faith in his name, he
hath strengthened this man*, whom you see, and know : *yea his*
name [*that of Jesus*] and the faith which is in him, hath [*restored*
this man, and] given him this perfect soundness before you all.—

* The construction of the original, as it is commonly pointed, is very perplexed, as is the C.T. The pointing of *Heinsius* is far preferable.

- 17 And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did *it*, as
 18 *did* also your rulers. But God hath thus fulfilled those things,
 which he foretold by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ
 19 should suffer. Repent, therefore, and turn to God, that so your
 sins may be blotted out ; that seasons of refreshment may come
 20 upon you from the presence of the Lord, and that he may at length
 send unto you this *same* Jesus Christ, who was before appointed*
 as the saviour of sinners, to receive you to eternal happiness above :
 21 whom indeed heaven must receive till the times of the regulation
 of all things† ; concerning which events God hath spoken by the
 22 mouth of all his holy prophets from the beginning of time. For
 Moses said to the fathers (*Deut.* xviii. 15.) “ Surely a prophet
 shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like
 unto me ; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say
 23 unto you : and it shall come to pass, that every soul who will not
 hearken to that prophet, shall be cut off from among the people.”
 24 Yea and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after,
 as many as spoke, have also foretold these days which you now see.
 25 You are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant, which
 God constituted with our fathers, saying to Abraham (*Gen.* xii. 3,
 &c.) “ And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be bless-
 26 ed.” To you first, God having raised up his child Jesus, hath
 sent him to bless you ; every one of you turning from your ini-
 quities.

REFLECTIONS.

Happy the minister whose heart is thus intent upon all opportuni-
 ties of doing good, as these holy apostles were ! Happy that faithful
 servant, who, like them, arrogates nothing to himself, but centers
 the praise of all in him who is the great source from whom every good
 and perfect gift proceeds ! Happy the man who is himself willing to
 be forgotten and overlooked, that God may be remembered and
 owned ! He, like this wise master-builder, will lay the foundation deep
 in a sense of sin, and will charge it with all its aggravations on the
 sinner, that he may thereby render the tidings of a Saviour welcome ;
 which they can never be till this burden has been felt. Yet will he,
 like Peter, conduct the charge with tenderness and respect, and be
 cautious not to overload even the greatest offender.—We see the ab-
 solute necessity of repentance ; which therefore is to be solemnly
 charged upon the consciences of all who desire that their sins may be
 blotted out of the book of God’s remembrance, and that they may
 share in that refreshment which nothing but the sense of his pardoning
 love can afford. Blessed souls are they who have experienced it ; for
 they may look upon all their present comforts as the dawning of eter-
 nal glory ; and having seen Christ with an eye of faith, and received
 that important cure, which nothing but his powerful and gracious name
 can effect, may be assured that God will send him again to complete

* So the best MSS. and several of the Fathers.

† The great day, when God will rectify all the seeming irregularities of his
 present dispensations.

the work he has so graciously begun, and to reduce the seeming *irregularities* of the present state into everlasting harmony, order, and beauty.—In the mean time, let us adore the wisdom of his providence, and the fidelity of his grace, which has over-ruled the folly and wickedness of men, to subserve his own holy purposes, and has accomplished the promises so long since made, of a *prophet to be raised up to Israel like Moses*, and indeed gloriously superior to him, both in the dignity of his character and office, and in the great salvation he was sent to procure.—This salvation was *first* offered to *Israel*, which had rendered itself so peculiarly unworthy by *killing the Prince of life*. Let us rejoice that he is now published to *us*, and that God has condescended to *send his Son* to *bless us sinners* of the Gentiles, in *turning us from our iniquities*. Let us view this salvation in its true light, and remember that if we are not willing to *turn from iniquity*, from *all iniquity*, from those iniquities that have been peculiarly *our own*, it is impossible we should have any share in it.

SECTION VIII.

The two apostles being seized by order of the Sanhedrim, declare their resolution to preach in the name of Jesus, notwithstanding their threatenings. Ch. iv. 1—22.

- 1 **A**ND while they (*Peter and John*) were speaking to the people, the priests came upon them, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached the resurrection from the dead in *the person* of Jesus.
- 3 And they laid hands upon them, and committed them into custody
- 4 unto the next day ; for it was now evening. But many of those who had heard the word, believed ; and the number of the men
- 5 *with those converted before* became about five thousand. And the next day their rulers, and elders, and scribes gathered together
- 6 at Jerusalem : and *Annas formerly* the high-priest, and Caiaphas*, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the high-priest's kindred. And having set them in the midst, they inquired, By what power, or in what name have you done this
- 8 *strange work* ? Then Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, said unto
- 9 them, O ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we are this day examined about the benefit conferred upon the impotent
- 10 man, by what means he is healed ; be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead,
- 11 *yea*, by him this man stands before you sound. This is the stone, which was set at nought by you builders, that is become the head
- 12 of the corner (*Ps. cxviii. 22.*) And there is salvation in no other ; neither is there any other name under heaven given among men, in which we must be saved.

* As Caiaphas was now high-priest, it seems strange that the title should be given to another :—[possibly ~~was~~ and, may have been transposed.]

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and understood that they were illiterate men, and in private stations of life*, they were astonished : and they knew them, that they had been
 14 with Jesus. And seeing the man that was cured standing with
 15 them, they had nothing to say against *the fact*. But having ordered them to withdraw out of the council, they conferred
 16 among themselves, saying, What shall we do with these men ? for that indeed a signal miracle hath been wrought by them, is manifest to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem ; and we cannot deny
 17 it. Nevertheless, that it may not any further spread among the people, let us severely threaten them, that they speak no more to
 18 any man in *this name*. And having called them *in again*, they charged them that they should not speak any more, or teach in
 19 the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answering them, said, Whether it be righteous in the sight of God, to obey you rather
 20 than God, judge ye : for we cannot but speak the things which
 21 we have seen and heard. And having threatened them again, they dismissed them ; finding nothing for which they might punish them, on account of the people ; because they all glorified God
 22 for that which was done : for the man, on whom this miracle of healing was wrought, was more than forty years old, *and therefore his case appeared desperate*.

REFLECTIONS.

We see, in the instance before us, the natural but detestable effects of a *proud, bigotted, over-bearing temper*, even where it seems least excusable. The Sadducees themselves, though they believed no future state of retribution, yet persecuted the apostles as eagerly, as if they, like some other Jews, had expected to merit heaven by their severity to them. On the other side, it is delightful to observe *the zeal and courage*, with which Peter and John defended the cause of their crucified Redeemer, even in the presence of those by whom he had so lately been condemned. Thus can God *give power to the feeble, and increase the strength of them that have no might*. The testimony they bore is well worth our regarding. *There is salvation in no other, neither is there any other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*. O that the ends of the earth might hear and reverence *that name* ! O that thousands, to whom it is yet unknown, may learn to build *all their hopes of salvation* upon it ; and may we never be *ashamed to own it, never afraid to adhere to it* ! May we speak of it with such a fervour, may we defend it with such a zeal, that they who are around about us may *take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus*, and trace the genuine effects of our intimate acquaintance with him !

Never was there an instance of a more memorable combat between the force of evidence and of prejudice ; never a more impudent attempt to bear down the cause of unquestionable truth by bru-

* The C. T. here is a very unhappy one, and does not do justice to these men, who were not *ignorant*, though unlearned.

tal violence. But *great is the truth, and it will prevail*. May the ministers of the gospel never want that courage in the defence of it which these holy men expressed ; always judging it infinitely more reasonable, more safe, and more necessary, *to obey God than man !* Never may we be ashamed to profess our reverence and love to him, who is our supreme ruler, and our most bountiful friend ; and may he give us such an inward and heart-influencing sense of the worth and sweetness of his gospel, as may effectually prevent our betraying or neglecting it !

SECTION IX.

The prayer of the disciples on the return of Peter and John, and a renewed effusion of the Spirit. Ch. iv. 23—35.

23 **A**ND Peter and John being dismissed, they came to their own
company, and related all that the chief priests and elders
24 had said to them. And when they heard *it*, they lift up their
voice with one accord to God, and said, Lord, thou art the God
who didst make heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that
25 are in them : who didst say by the mouth of thy servant David,
“ Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things ?
26 The kings of the earth set themselves *in hostile array*, and the
rulers combined together against the Lord, and against his Mes-
27 siah.” For of a truth, against thine holy child Jesus, whom thou
hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the heathen,
28 and the people of Israel, have combined to do what thine hand
29 and thy counsel had before determined to be done. And now, O
Lord, regard their threatenings ; and give unto thy servants to
30 speak thy word with all freedom ; whilst thou art stretching out
thine hand for healing ; and signs and wonders are done by the
31 name of thy holy child Jesus. And while they were praying, the
place in which they were assembled was shaken ; and they were
all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God
with freedom.

32 Now the heart and soul of the multitude of believers was one :
nor did any one of *them* call any of his possessions his own ; but
33 all things were common amongst them. And with great power
did the apostles give forth their testimony of the resurrection of
34 the Lord Jesus ; and great grace was upon them all. Neither
was there any one indigent person among them ; for as many
as were proprietors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought
35 the price of the things they sold, and laid *it* down at the feet of
the apostles ; and distribution was made to every one according as
any had need.

REFLECTIONS.

This was indeed the golden age of the church ; and it is impossible to trace the memoirs of it, if we *love Zion*, without a secret complacency and exultation of mind. How amiable and how venerable do

the apostles and primitive converts appear, in this native simplicity of the Christian character! and what a glory did the grace and Spirit of God put upon them, far beyond all that human establishments, splendid dignities, or ample revenues, could ever give to those that have succeeded them! While *the multitude of them had one heart and one soul*, and each was ready to *impart to his brethren* whatever he himself possessed, how high a relish of pleasure did they receive, and how were their joys multiplied by each of their number!

Thus does divine grace, when it powerfully enters into the heart, open it in sentiments of *generosity and love*. Thus does it conquer that *selfish temper* which reigns so frequently in the minds of sinful men, and makes them like wild beasts rather than like brethren to each other. Providence does not indeed call us entirely to *give up our possessions*, or to introduce a *community of goods* among Christians, in circumstances so different from those which we have now been surveying. Yet surely it is *always* our duty, and will be our highest interest, to remember that we are not original proprietors of what we possess, but *stewards*, who are to manage what is intrusted to our care, for the honour of our great *Master*, and the good of his family here on earth; continually ready to resign any part, or even the whole of it, whenever these important ends shall require such a resignation.

In the mean time, let us frequently *lift up our hearts* to the great and ever blessed God, who hath *made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that is in them*, that he would support and extend the progress of that gospel in the world, which he hath so graciously begun to plant. *Kings* may still *set themselves*, and *rulers* take counsel against it; but he knows how to turn *their counsels* into *foolishness*, and *their rage* into *shame*. He hath *anointed Jesus his holy child with the oil of gladness*, and placed him on his throne in heaven; and all the united malice and fury of his enemies can do no more, than what shall make part of his wise and gracious scheme for the government of his people. Let us pray, that he would *give freedom of speech* to all employed in pleading his cause; and that he will plentifully *anoint them with the effusion of his Spirit*: And let the *signs and wonders* which were *done by the name of Jesus* in former ages, encourage us to hope that he will never totally desert a scheme which he once so illustriously interposed to establish; and consequently let them animate us to exert ourselves in its service, whatever labours, threatenings, or dangers may meet us in our way!

SECTION X.

The death of Ananias and Sapphira: that and other miracles promote the increase of the church. Ch. iv. 36, 37. v. 1—16.

26 **A**ND among other converts who parted with their effects, there was one *Joses*, who by the apostles was surnamed *Barnabas* (which being interpreted, signifies, A son of consolation) a Levite,

37 and by birth a Cyprian ; *he* having an estate, sold it,* and brought
 V. the money, and laid it down at the feet of the apostles.—But a
 1 certain man, named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold an estate,
 2 and secreted part of the price, his wife also being conscious of it ;
 and bringing *only* a certain part of it, he laid it down at the feet of
 3 the apostles. But Peter, *under the direction of the Spirit*, said, O
 Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart, *to attempt* to impose
 on the Holy Spirit, and to secrete part of the price of the land ?
 4 While it remained *unsold* did it not continue thine ? and when it
 was sold, was it not in thine own power† ? Why *then* hast thou
 admitted this thing into thine heart ? Thou hast not lied to men
 5 *only*, but to God. And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down
 and expired : and great fear came on all that heard these things.
 6 Then the young men arose, and bound him up, and carrying him
 7 out, they buried him.—And after the interval of about three hours,
 8 his wife also, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter
 said to her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much. And
 9 she said, Yes, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it,
 that you *both* have conspired together to tempt the Spirit of the
 Lord ? Behold the feet of those, who have been burying thy hus-
 band, *are* at the door, and they shall *forthwith* carry thee out.
 10 And immediately she fell down at his feet, and expired : and the
 young men coming in, found her dead, and carried her out, and
 11 buried her by her husband‡. And great fear came upon all
 12 the assembly, and upon all that heard these things.—And many
other signs and wonders were done among the people, by the hands
 of the apostles ; (and they were all unanimously in Solomon's
 13 portico ; and none of the rest *who were not really converted*, pre-
 sumed to join himself to them ; but the people magnified them :
 14 and multitudes both of men and women believing, were the more
 15 *willingly* added to the Lord :) insomuch that along the streets they
 brought out the sick, and laid them on beds, and couches, that
 at least the shadow of Peter, coming by, might overshadow some
 16 of them. And multitudes also *out* of the cities round about,
 came together to Jerusalem, bringing the sick, and those that
 were troubled with unclean spirits, who were all healed.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us behold, with humble reverence, this awful instance of the
 divine severity, so well calculated to impress the minds of these new
 converts, and to prevent any of *those frauds*, which the charity of
 those who were most zealous in their profession might have occasion-
 ed in some others. Let us learn, how hateful *falsehood* is to *the God*
of truth, and make it our care to avoid it ; and not only shun a direct
lie, but the taking undue advantage from any ambiguities of expres-

* This may be mentioned, as the first foreign estate sold, or as being of ex-
 traordinary value.

† A proof that none were *obliged* to sell their estates.

‡ Such severity of punishment was necessary to deter others, and was the
 more expedient as Christianity was in its first rise.

sion, and, in a word, all recourse to the arts of *equivocation*. God only knows, how soon such treacherous lips may be sealed up in eternal silence. How does *Satan* delude the heart which he fills! And how peculiarly fatal is the delusion, when he leads men to sins, which especially affront the *Holy Spirit of God*! That Spirit rested on the apostles, and taught them to discover the hidden thing of darkness; so that they who tempted it, fell in the attempt, and became a sign. May integrity and uprightness ever preserve us! And, while we avoid all the kinds and arts of *dissimulation*, let us peculiarly detest those, which would offer a double insult to the God of heaven, by taking their dress from the religion, which his own Son has planted.

The church is never happier, than when the sons of falsehood are deterred from intruding into it. If its members are less numerous, it is a sufficient balance, that it is more pure.—We see what singular miracles were done by the apostles; miracles equal, and in some respects, as it seems by these instances, superior to those which Christ performed in the days of his ministration here below. When will the happy time come, in which men shall express as great a concern for their souls, as they here did for their bodies? When shall the streets and assemblies be filled with those who, from a sense of their spiritual maladies, shall apply to the ministers of Christ for healing? Let it always be remembered, that whatever they do for this happy purpose, it is indeed their master that does it by them; and that all their most assiduous applications, separate from his blessing, can effect no more than the shadow of Peter could have done, if the power of Christ had not wrought on those over whom it passed.

SECTION XI.

The apostles imprisoned, and miraculously delivered; Gamaliel's advice prevails, to prevent further extremities. Ch. v. 17, &c.

17 **B**UT the high-priest arising, and all they that were with him (which
18 was the sect of the * Sadducees) seeing the effect of these
18 miracles, were filled with zeal, and laid their hands on the apostles,
19 and put them into the common prison. But an angel of the Lord
by night opened the doors of the prison, and bringing them out
20 said, Go, and presenting yourselves in the temple, speak to the
21 people all the words of this life. And hearing this, they went
very early into the temple, and taught. But the high-priest be-
ing come, and they that were with him, they called together the
sanhedrim, even the whole senate of the children of Israel, and
22 sent to the prison to have them brought. But when the officers
came, they found them not in the prison. Returning therefore,
23 they made their report, saying, We found indeed the prison shut
with all safety, and the keeper standing without, before the doors;
24 but having opened them, we found no one within. Now when the
high-priest, and the captain of the temple, and the chief priests

* The Sadducees were the most exasperated at the apostles' doctrine, it being most directly opposite to their notions.

heard these words, they doubted concerning them, what this could
 25 be. But one came, and told them, saying, Behold the men, whom
 ye put in prison, are standing in the temple, and teaching the peo-
 26 ple. Then the captain went with the officers, and brought them
away, but not by violence; for they feared the people lest they
 27 *should be stoned: and when they had brought them in, they set*
them before the sanhedrim. And the high-priest asked them,
 28 *saying, Did we not strictly charge you, that you should not teach*
in this name? and behold you have filled Jerusalem with your
doctrine, and would bring the odium of this man's blood upon us.
 29 But Peter and *the rest of the apostles* answered and said, It is ne-
 30 cessary to obey God, rather than men. The God of our fathers
 hath raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree :
 31 Him hath God exalted at his right-hand, *to be a prince and sav-*
 32 *iour, to give repentance unto Israel*, and remission of sins. And*
we are his witnesses of these things, and the Holy Spirit also,
whom God hath given to them who submit to his government.—
 33 And when they heard *this*, they grinded their teeth at them, and
 34 consulted how they might put them all to death. But a certain
 Pharisee in the sanhedrim, whose name was Gamaliel, a doctor
 of the law, in great esteem among all the people, rose up, and
 35 commanded the apostles to be taken out for a little while : and he
 said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what
 36 you are about to do to these men ; for some time ago Theudas
 arose, pretending himself to be some extraordinary person ; to
 whom a number of men, about four hundred, adhered : who was
 slain *by the Roman forces* ; and all who hearkened to him were
 37 scattered, and came to nothing. After him Judas the Galilean
 arose in the days of the enrolment, and drew a multitude of peo-
 ple after him, and he was destroyed ; and all who had hearkened to
 38 him were dispersed. And *therefore* with regard to the present af-
 fair, I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone :
 for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will moulder away ;
 39 but if it be of God, you cannot dissolve it. *Take heed therefore*
 40 *lest you be found even fighters against God. And they yielded to*
him ; and having called in the apostles and scourged them, they
charged them not to speak any more in the name of Jesus, and
 41 *thus dismissed them. And they departed from the presence of*
 the sanhedrim, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be ex-
 42 posed to infamy for the sake of his name. And every day they
 ceased not in the temple, and from house to house, to teach, and
 to preach Jesus as the Messiah.

REFLECTIONS.

Which shall we survey with the greater surprise, the continual
 courage of the apostles, or the continued malice of their persecutors ?
 Again they *seize them*, again they *imprison them* ; but how vainly do
 these feeble worms, amidst all the pride of dignity and power, op-

* That is, to send terms of peace and reconciliation by him, to the Jews
 who had so ungratefully abused him.

pose the counsels of Omnipotence ! *The angel of the Lord opens the door of their prison*, and leads forth his faithful servants to renewed liberty : An office which this celestial Spirit could not but perform with delight ; as it was, no doubt, with unutterable pleasure that he gave them their errand, to go and publish with undaunted freedom and zeal the words of *this life*, of this gospel which enlivens dead souls, and points out the road to an happy immortality. O that the folly of those who have heard it had never converted it into a *savour of death* ! Yet, behold, *the council* renewed the attack ! The same madness which instigated the Jews to seize Jesus, when they had been *struck to the ground* by his miraculous power, animated these wretches to contrive the destruction of persons whom God himself had just before rescued from their hands ; as they had formerly plotted that of *Izazurus*, who had, by a yet more astonishing wonder, been recalled from the grave. To what fatal extravagancies will not prejudice hurry the mind ? Against what convincing evidence will it not harden it ?

Ye shall, says our Lord, *be brought before councils for my sake* ; and it shall be *for a testimony against them*. And such was this repeated admonition which these holy prisoners, then at the bar, gave to *the judges of Israel* : Still they urge the divine authority of their mission ; still they proclaim him as head of the church and world, whom these very men had so lately crucified in so outrageous and contemptuous a manner. They point to him, whom these priests and rulers had insulted on the cross, as now *exalted on the right hand of God*, and urge them to seek *repentance and remission of sin* from him, to whom they had denied the common justice due to the meanest of men, the common humanity due to the vilest of criminals in their dying moments, giving him in the thirst of his last agonies *vinegar mingled with gall*. Thousands of the people had fallen under this charge ; and Jesus the Prince had taken them under his protection : Jesus the Saviour had washed them in his blood. But by what is too frequently the fatal prerogative of greatness, these princes of Israel had hearts too high for the discipline of wisdom, and were enraged against these humble ministers of the Son of God ; who nevertheless addressed them with all the respect which fidelity would allow, and could gladly have poured forth their blood for the salvation of those who so cruelly thirsted for it. They *gnashed* on these faithful ambassadors *with their teeth*, as if they would have devoured them alive ; and justly will *gnashing of teeth* be the eternal portion of those who thus outrageously rejected the counsel of God against themselves.

But God raised up a guardian for the apostles, where perhaps they least expected it ; and the prudence of Gamaliel for a while checked the fury of his brethren. So does God sometimes use the natural good sense and temper of those who do not themselves receive the gospel, for the protection of those who are faithfully devoted to its service. Gamaliel had attentively observed former events ; which is indeed the way to learn the surest lessons of wisdom, which are to be learnt any where but from the word of God. He had seen some ruined by their seditious zeal ; and let those who call themselves Christians

take heed how they rashly rise up against legal authority, lest *taking the sword they perish by it*. Judiciously does he admonish *the council to take heed lest they be found fighters against God*. May divine grace ever guard us from that fatal error into which all who oppose the gospel, whatever they may imagine, assuredly fall! They cannot indeed dissolve it, but they *dash themselves in pieces* against it. *Be wise therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth!*

For reasons of State the apostles were to be *scourged*, though their judges were inwardly convinced that it was at least possible their message might be divine. Deliver us, O Lord, from that *policy* which shall lead us to imagine any evil so great as that which may offend thee! The punishment which these excellent men suffered was infamous, but the cause in which they endured it rendered it glorious; nor could *those stripes* be half so painful to their flesh, as an opportunity of thus approving their fidelity to their Lord was delightful to their pious souls. Well might they triumph in bearing the scourge for him who *bore the cross*, and died on it for them. Let us *arm ourselves with the same mind*, if in a severer sense than this we should be called for his sake to *resist unto blood*.

SECTION XII.

The choice of the seven deacons. Stephen preaches Christ, and is brought before the sanhedrim. Ch. vi. 1—12.

- 1 **N**OW in those days, the number of the disciples being multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians* against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily
 2 ministration of *charity*. And the twelve apostles having called the multitude of the disciples together, said, It is by no means agreeable, that we should leave the word of God to attend tables;
 3 therefore, brethren, look out from among yourselves seven men of an attested character, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom,
 4 whom we may set over this affair: and we will constantly attend
 5 to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.—And the speech was pleasing to all the multitude; and they elected Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas a proselyte
 6 of Antioch; whom they presented before the apostles: and they
 7 having prayed, laid *their* hands upon them†. And the word of God grew; and the number of disciples in and about Jerusalem was greatly multiplied; and a great multitude *even* of priests became obedient to the faith. And Stephen being full of grace and of power, wrought many miracles and great signs among the people. But there arose some of the synagogue, which is called *that*

* Or *Hellenists*; i. e. of those foreign Jewish converts who used the Greek language. The *Hebrews* were the natives of Judea, who used the Hebrew or Syriac tongue.

† To express their solemn designation to the office, and to confer such extraordinary gifts as it might require.

of the Libertines (*having been children of freed men*) and some of the Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and of them *who were natives* 10 of Cilicia and Asia, disputing * with Stephen. And they were not able to stand against the wisdom and spirit with which he spake. 11 Then they suborned men to say, We heard him speak blasphemous 12 words against Moses, and *against* God. And they stirred up the people and the elders and the Scribes, and setting upon *him*, they dragged him away with them, and brought *him* to the sanhedrim.

REFLECTIONS.

We see how difficult it is, even for the wisest and best of men, to manage a great multitude of affairs, without *inconvenience* and without *reflection*. It will therefore be our prudence not to ingross too much business into our own hands, but to be willing to divide it with our brethren, [yea] with our *inferiors*, allotting to each their *proper provinces*, that the whole may proceed with harmony and order.—Let us be solicitous that nothing may be done *through partiality*; especially let those avoid it who are intrusted with the distribution of *charities*. It is a solemn trust, for which their characters at least are to answer to the world now, and they themselves must ere long account for it to God. Let them therefore be willing to be informed of the truth of particular cases, willing to compare a variety of them, and then select such as in their consciences they are persuaded it is the will of God they should, in present circumstances, *regard*, and in such or such a proportion prefer to the rest.—In religious societies it may be highly proper that, after the example here given in the apostolic age, *deacons*, or persons to perform this office, should be elected by the society, in concurrence with their ministers. It is *their business to serve tables*. Happy those societies who make choice of men of an *attested character*, and of those who appear by the virtues and graces of the *Christian temper* to be in that sense *full of the Holy Spirit*!

While these good men are dealing forth their liberal contributions (by which, while Christ has any poor members remaining, we are still to testify *our love to him*) let ministers devote themselves with all attention *to prayer, and to the ministry of the word*. Let those, who would administer the word with comfort and success, remember of how great importance it is, that it be *watered with prayer*, falling upon it *as the former and as the latter rain*; and especially see to it, that, by the constant exercise of lively devotion in secret, in their families, and on other proper social occasions, they keep their graces vigorous and active; that, living continually in such a state of nearness to God, they may be qualified to speak in his name with that dignity, tenderness, and authority, which nothing but true and elevated devotion can naturally express, or can long retain.

Let us adore that efficacy of divine grace, whereby *a multitude of the Jewish priests were made obedient to the faith*; and let us heartily

* The chief synagogues in Jerusalem had each an academy belonging to it, under the direction of a Rabbi, and it is no wonder some of the young students should become such disputants as these.

pray, that, if there are any who claim a sacred character, and yet, out of regard to worldly honour or interest, oppose the power and purity of the gospel, they may be convinced by the influence of the blessed Spirit, that they can have no interest in contradiction to the truth, and that they are happy in purchasing, at the highest price, that gospel which may enrich them for ever.—In whatsoever station we are fixed, whether in the world or the church, let us always remember our obligation to plead the cause of the gospel, and to *render a reason for the hope that is in us*. If this engage us in *disputation with men of corrupt minds*, we must still *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*, knowing that *he is faithful that has promised*.—The vilest charge may, as in this instance, be fixed upon the most worthy men. Piety may be defamed as *blasphemy*, and that which is the true love of our country as *treason against it*: but there is *one supreme Lawgiver and Judge*, who will not fail, sooner or later, to plead the cause of injured innocence. And when we read of this vile attack that was made by perjury on the character and life of *Stephen*, we may take occasion to adore that wise and powerful providence which so remarkably exerts itself to defend our reputation and our lives from those false and venomous tongues which, were it not for that secret invisible restraint, might, *like a two edged sword*, so quickly destroy both.

SECTION XIII.

Stephen, accused before the sanhedrim, vindicates himself. Ch. vi. 13, &c. vii. 1—14.

- 13 **A**ND while Stephen stood before the sanhedrim, they set up false witnesses, who said, This man is incessantly speaking
 14 blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change its customs, which Moses delivered to us.
 15 And all that sat in the sanhedrim, fixing their eyes upon him, saw his countenance like the countenance of an angel.
 vii. Then the high priest said, Are these things indeed thus? And
 2 Stephen, beginning a large discourse * in his own vindication, said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, while he was in Mesopotamia, before
 3 he dwelt in Charran, and said to him (*Gen. xi. 3.*) Depart from thy country, and from thy kindred; and come into a land, which
 4 I will shew thee. Then departing from the land of the Chaldeans, he dwelt in Charran; and from thence, after his father died, he caused him to remove his habitation into this land, in which
 5 you now dwell. And he gave him no inheritance in it, not so much as the dimensions of his foot: nevertheless he promised to give it for a possession to him, even to his seed after him, when

* In this discourse Stephen shews his firm persuasion of the divine authority of that law which he was charged with blaspheming, [and properly recapitulates the leading facts in the Mosaic history.]

6 *as yet he had no child. And God spake to him thus in a vision* (Gen. xv. 13.)—that his seed should sojourn in a foreign land,
 7 and they shall enslave and abuse them four hundred years. And the nation to which they shall be enslaved, said God, I will judge; and afterwards they shall come out, and serve me in this place.
 8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so he begat Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day: And Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob *began* the twelve patriarchs. And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: nevertheless God was
 10 with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt: and he constituted him ruler over Egypt, and all his house. And a famine came upon all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great
 12 affliction; and our fathers did not find sustenance. But Jacob 13 hearing that there was corn in Egypt, sent our fathers first; and the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and
 14 the family of Joseph was discovered to Pharaoh. And Joseph sent and invited his father Jacob, and all his kindred to him, amounting (*with their wives*) to seventy-five souls*.

REFLECTIONS.

Thus loud may the clamour of malice and falsehood rise against innocence and truth. Incessant *blasphemy* is charged on one of the most pious of men; and we wonder at it the less, since it was charged upon Jesus himself; and *if they called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more those of his household?* His disciple learns of him *not to render evil for evil*, but answers in the language of calm reason, and of meek though powerful conviction.—While Stephen leads back our contemplation to so many remarkable facts of the Old Testament, let us reflect upon them with those devout affections which become *the Israel of God*. Let us adore *the God of glory that appeared to Abraham*, and called him forth to be so bright an example of faith and piety, in *leaving his country and kindred*, to follow the leadings of providence, when he *knew not* in what settlement they should end. Let us, in imitation of him, *whose children*, if true believers, *we also are*, sit loose to every thing in this world, that we may be *ready to leave it* when God shall, by one providence or another, give the signal for our remove. If the next step of duty lies plain before us, let us trust our leader to mark out all that follow, in such an order, and to such an end, as he shall think fit; secure of this, that, while we follow infinite Wisdom, we cannot wander out of the way to true happiness, and that all the divine promises shall certainly be accomplished, whatever cross event may seem to interpose and obstruct.

When God appointed that *the seed of Abraham* should *sojourn* and suffer in a *strange land*, the pious patriarch acquiesced in it: nor let us be over-anxious about the difficulties into which our pos-

* To reconcile this with Gen. xvi. 27. where we read of but seventy, the author has a long note. He mentions *Beza's* conjecture, that the original reading might be *πενήκον* or *πενήκον* in all instead of *πενή* five.

terity may be led. Let us adore the divine goodness, that he has *established his covenant with us, and with our seed after us* ; and while we in imitation of Abraham, bring *our infant offspring* to receive the solemn seal of that covenant, let us remember our engagements to instruct them, as they grow up, in the tenor of it, and labour to the utmost to engage their own personal consent to it ; and then they will be truly rich and free. though in the penury of a famished land, or under the rod of an Egyptian tyrant.—The mysterious conduct of divine Providence with regard to the pious Joseph, who became a *slav* , that he might be made a prince, and who was trained up for the golden chain in the discipline of *iron fetters*, may surely be sufficient to teach us to *judge nothing before the time*, and to wait *the end of the Lord*, before we arraign the seeming severity of a part of his conduct towards those, whom we might imagine the most proper objects of his regard. And surely it will appear none of the least considerable of those rewards, which Providence bestowed on the approved and distinguished virtue of Joseph, that he had an opportunity of *nourishing his pious father* in his declining days, of spreading a mild and pleasant ray over the evening of a life, which had been so often beclouded with storms, and of sheltering (as it were) under his princely robe, that hoary head, which had once been turned into a *fountain of tears* over the bloody fragments of the *many-coloured coat*.

SECTION XIV.

Stephen enumerates other facts in the Jewish history, tending to his own vindication. Ch. vii. 15—36.

15 **S**TEPHEN proceeded in his speech before the sanhedrim. So Jacob went down into Egypt and died, he and our fathers ;
 16 and they were carried over to Sychem, and were laid in the sepulchre, which * *He* (that is Jacob) purchased for a sum of money,
 17 of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem. And as the time of the promise drew near, which God had sworn to Abraham, the
 18 people grew and multiplied in Egypt, till another king arose, who
 19 knew not Joseph. He forming crafty designs against our kindred, treated our fathers injuriously, by causing their *male* infants to be
 20 exposed, that their race might perish. In which time Moses was born ; and he was exceedingly beautiful, and was bred up for three
 21 months in his father's house. And being exposed, the daughter of Pharaoh took him up, and nourished him for her own son,
 22 And Moses was educated in all the wisdom and learning of the Egyptians ; and he was mighty in his discourses, and in his
 23 actions.—But when he was arrived at the full age of forty years, it

* It is so evident that the name of *Abraham* has been wrongly inserted here, in the room of *Jacob*, or the pronoun *He*, in direct contradiction to *Gen. xxxiii. 19.* that I make no scruple of leaving it out. The author, though he retains it in his *translation*, so manages his *paraphrase* as to correct the blunder. ED.

came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.
 24 And beholding *one of them* injured, he defended *him* ; and smiting
 25 the Egyptian, he avenged him that was oppressed. And he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would give them salvation by his hand : but they did not understand *it*.
 26 And the next day he shewed himself to them, as they were quarreling, and would have persuaded them to peace, saying, Men, you are brethren, why do ye injure one another ? But he that injured his neighbour thrust him away, saying, Who hath made thee a
 28 ruler and a judge over us ? Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst yesterday slay the Egyptian ? Then Moses fled at this saying, and became a sojourner in the land of Midian ; where he begat two
 30 sons.—And when forty years were fulfilled, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of
 31 mount Sinai. And Moses seeing *it*, *greatly* *r* wondered at the
 32 vision : and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, *saying*, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And
 33 Moser trembled, and did not dare [*steadfastly*] to behold *it*. And the Lord said unto him, Loose thy shoes from thy feet ; for
 34 the place in which thou standest is holy ground. I have surely seen the evil treatment of my people which are in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and I am come down to deliver
 35 them : and now come, I will send thee into Egypt. This Moses, whom they renounced, saying, Who hath constituted thee a ruler, and a judge ? this very person did God by the hand of the angel, who appeared to him in the bush, send *to be* a ruler, and a redeemer.
 36 He led them forth, doing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years.

REFLECTIONS.

He is indeed *faithful* that hath promised : he remembereth his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded even to a thousand generations. He multiplied his people in Egypt, that Canaan might not want inhabitants, when the sinners against their own souls, that then held it, should be cut off : And when he had determined so to multiply the holy seed, vain were all the attempts of the ungrateful Egyptians to destroy the kindred of him by whom, as they had formerly confessed their lives had been saved : Yet was the rod of the wicked permitted for a while to rest upon their back, that the remembrance of the bondage and the cruelties they had there endured might, throughout all generations, be a source of joyful and grateful obedience to that God who delivered them from the land of Egypt, and from the house of bondage, and an engagement to serve him who had so illustriously triumphed over idolatry, as it were in its head-quarters. The church has often had its winter season ; yet Providence has overruled the severity of that, to conduce to the verdure and beauty of its spring, and to the fruitfulness of its summer and its autumn.

Moses was born in the midst of this persecuting time, and when *exposed*, was the care of divine Providence; the *compassion* which God put into the heart of this *Egyptian princess*, was to draw after it a train of most important consequences. Moses was fitted for the great part he was to act in the close of life by very different means; the learning, the magnificence, and politeness of the court of Egypt were to do their part, that he might be able to appear with honour in that court as an ambassador, and to conduct himself with becoming dignity as a prince: but they could not do the whole: They were to illustrate his generosity in seeking, in the midst of such various *pleasures*, and at the expense of such high *prospects*, to vindicate *his oppressed brethren*, whose sorrows touched his heart, and whose *groans* pierced (if I may so express it) through all the music of the court, through all the martial noise of the camp, in which he might sometimes reside and command. Glorious triumph of faith, that when he was *come to such full age*, he *refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter*, and chose rather to meet with *affliction* in the cause of Christ, *than to enjoy the temporary pleasures of sin*! But *forty years* of retirement in the desert of Midian, spent in the meditations and devotions, for which the life of a *shepherd* gave so great advantage, must ripen him to feed God's people Israel; while they, in the mean time, justly groaned under the continuance of that *bondage* from which they were so backward to accept of a proffered *deliverer*. At length light breaks in upon them in the midst of their darkness: Let us turn aside and behold with proper affection *this great sight*, the bush burning but not consumed; and therein an emblem of the preservation of the church, even amidst the fiercest flames. Let us hear with pleasure that voice which proclaims to all that hear it, so compassionate and faithful a God; which opens so glorious and lasting a hope; *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*. Thou art not, O Lord, the God of the dead, but of the living; these pious patriarchs therefore *live with thee*, and their believing seed shall partake of that life and joy in the city, which because thou hast prepared for them, thou art not ashamed to be called their God.

How does God manifest the heart of a parent towards these his oppressed children! *I have seen, I have seen the affliction of Israel*: Thus, O Lord, dost thou see all our afflictions! Let thy church, and each of thy people, trust thee to come down for their deliverance in thine own time and way. Let us with pleasure behold this Moses whom they rejected, and from whom a worthless offender could not bear a reproof, *made a leader and a redeemer*: So is our blessed Jesus, though once rejected and despised, *exalted to be a prince and a saviour*. It is not in vain that we have trusted, *it is he that should redeem Israel*. He has conquered the tyrant of hell, he has broken our chains, he has brought us forth into a wilderness, but a wilderness in which God nourishes and guides us; and he shall ere long have what Moses had not, the honour and delight of leading all his people into the land of promise, and dividing to them a joyful and everlasting inheritance there.

SECTION XV.

Stephen proceeds in his discourse, till his audience are so enraged that they stone him. Ch. vii. 37, &c.—viii. 1.

- H**AVING mentioned to the sanhedrim the divine commission of Moses, Stephen proceeded,—This is that Moses, who said to the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from amongst your brethren, like unto me; him shall you hear. This is he, who was in the assembly in the wilderness, with the angel, that spake to him on mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the lively oracles, to give them unto us. To whom our fathers would not be obedient, but thrust him from them, and returned back again to Egypt in their hearts, saying to Aaron, Make us gods, who may march before us; for as for this Moses, who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him. And they made a calf in those days, and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. But God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, "O ye house of Israel, did ye offer victims and sacrifices to me for forty years in the wilderness? And you have since taken up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, even the figures, which you have made to worship them: and therefore I will carry you away beyond Babylon." (Amos v. 25.) The tabernacle of witness was with our fathers in the wilderness, as he had appointed, who spake unto Moses to make it according to the model which he had seen: which also our fathers receiving, brought in with Joshua into the possession of the heathen, whom God drove out from before the face of our fathers, until the days of David; who found favour before God, and made it his petition to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him an house: yet the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet (Is. lxvi. 1.) "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: what house will you build for me, saith the Lord? or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?"—And Stephen [probably] perceiving that they understood whither his discourse tended, and that they were eager to interrupt him, more closely addressed his persecutors, saying, Oh ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye always do resist the Holy Spirit: As your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? yea, they slew those, who spake before of the coming of that righteous one; of whom you have now become the betrayers, and murderers. Who have received the law through ranks of angels, and have not kept it. And hearing these things, they were cut to the heart*, and they gnash-

* Or, "their hearts were sawn asunder." D.

55 ed *their* teeth upon him. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looking up stedfastly towards heaven, saw the glory of God, or *bright symbol of the divine presence*, and Jesus standing at the
 56 right hand of God. And he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right-hand of God.
 57 But crying out with a loud voice, they stopped their ears, and
 58 rushed upon him with one accord. And casting *him* out of the city, they stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their garments
 59 at the feet of a young man, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen invoking *his great Lord* and saying, Lord Jesus,
 60 receive my spirit. And bending his knees, he cried out with a
 viii. loud voice, O Lord, charge not this sin to their account. And
 1 when he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul was well pleased with his slaughter.

REFLECTIONS.

Thankfully must we own the divine goodness in having fulfilled this important promise, of *raising up a prophet like Moses*, a prophet indeed far superior to him whom *God's Israel* is on the highest penalties required to *hear*. May we be all *taught by him*, and ever own that divine authority which attends all his doctrines and all his commands! By him God has given us *lively oracles* indeed, that may well penetrate deep into our souls, as being well contrived to animate them, and to secure their eternal life. But O, how many of those who have *heard of him*, and been *baptized into his name*, in a more express manner than *Israel was baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea*, refuse to hearken to him, and in *their hearts turn back into Egypt*; being guilty of practices as notoriously opposite to his precepts, as the idolatry of the *golden calf* to those of *Moses*. Long did the patience of God bear *with Israel* in succeeding ages, while the *tabernacle of Moloch* and the *star of Remphan* diverted their regards from the worship of their *living Jehovah*; but at length he *gave them up* to captivity. Well have we deserved, by our apostacy from God, to be made proportionable monuments of his wrath; yet still he continues graciously to dwell among us; and while the *Jewish tabernacle*, formed so exactly *after the divine model* in the mount is no more, and while the more splendid temple which Solomon raised is long since laid in desolation, the most high God, superior to all *temples made with hands*, infinitely superior even to *heaven itself*, continues still to favour us with his presence, and condescends to own us for *his people*, and to call himself *our God*. Let us take the most diligent heed that we be not *uncircumcised in heart and in ears*, and that we do not, after so fatal an example, *resist the Holy Spirit*, and by *rejecting Christ*, incur a guilt greater than that of the Jews, who violated the law received through ranks of attendant angels; for that milder and gentler form, in which this divine lawgiver has appeared to us, will render the ingratitude and guilt of our rebellion far more aggravated than theirs.

The reproofs of the Holy martyr Stephen were indeed plain and faithful, and therefore they were so much the more kind; but instead

of attending to so just and so wise a remonstrance, those sinners against their own souls *stopped their ears*, lift up an outrageous cry, and like so many savage beasts *rush upon him* to destroy him ; overwhelming that head with stones which *shone like an angel of God !* Fatal instance of prejudice and of rage ! But how were all the terrors of this murderous crew, when armed with the instruments of immediate death, dispelled by the glorious vision of *Christ at the right-hand of God !* Well might he then remain intrepid, well might he commend his departing spirit into the hands of his divine Saviour, as able to keep what he committed to him until that day.—Let us with holy pleasure behold this bright image of our Redeemer, this *first martyr*, who, following so closely his recent steps (as he suffered so near the place that had been the scene of his agonies) appears to have imbibed so much of the same Spirit : Having thus solemnly consigned his soul to Christ, all that remained was, like Christ, to *pray for his murderers* ; full of compassion for their souls, while dying by their hands, he only said, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*, and then gently *fell asleep* ; expired in holy composure and serenity of soul, and slept sweetly in the soft bosom of his Saviour.

O *Saul*, couldst thou have believed, if one had told thee, while thou wast urging on the cruel multitude, while thou wast glorying over his venerable corpse, that the time should come when thou thyself shouldst be *twice stoned* in the cause in which he died, and triumph in having committed thy soul likewise to that *Jesus* whom thou wast now *blaspheming* ? In this instance his dying prayer was illustriously answered : In this instance *the lion lies down with the lamb*, and *the leopard with the kid* ; and it is most delightful to think, that *the martyr Stephen*, and *Saul* that barbarous persecutor (afterwards his brother both in faith and in martyrdom) are now joined in bonds of everlasting friendship, and dwell together in the happy company of those who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ; May we at length be joined with them, and in the mean time let us glorify God in both !

SECTION XVI.

The Christian converts dispersed by persecution. Philip goes to Samaria, where many embrace the gospel, and Simon the sorcerer is baptized. Ch. viii. 1—13.

- 1 **A**ND in that very day in which Stephen was stoned, there was a great persecution excited against the church in Jerusalem ; and they were all dispersed through the regions of Judea, and Sa-
- 2 maria except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen
- 3 forth to his burial, and made great lamentation for him. But Saul made havock of the church, entering into houses, and dragging
- 4 men and women, whom he committed to prison. Nevertheless they who were dispersed, went about preaching the word.
- 5 Then came Philip to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ
- 6 unto them. And the people unanimously attended to the things

that were spoken by Philip, as they heard and saw the miracles
 7 which he performed. For unclean spirits, which had possessed
 many, crying with a loud voice, came out of them; and many who
 were paralytic and lame were healed. And there was great joy
 8 in that city.—But there was a certain man, named Simon, who had
 9 before in the same city used magic, and astonished the nation of
 10 Samaria; pretending himself to be some extraordinary person:
 to whom they all paid regard from the least to the greatest, saying,
 11 This man is the great power of God. And they paid *this* regard
 to him, because he had for a long time astonished them with his
 12 enchantments. But when they gave credit to Philip, preaching
 the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus
 13 Christ, they were baptized both men and women. And Simon
 himself also believed; and being baptized, he kept near to Phi-
 lip, beholding with amazement the great and powerful miracles
 which were wrought by him.

REFLECTIONS.

It was honourably and well done of these *devout men*, to pay this last token of respect to the remains of this *first martyr* in the Christian cause, by *carrying him to his funeral* with solemn pomp and public lamentation, though he died like an infamous criminal. Our ever-living and victorious Lord, no doubt, took it well at their hands, and they will be *recompensed at the resurrection of the just*, when that mangled body which they deposited in the grave shall be *transformed into the glorious image* of him for whom he gave it up to destruction, and to whose immediate and faithful care he committed the far nobler and more important part.

The wrath of man, O Lord, shall praise thee. It was particularly made to praise thee in this instance, by sending out the *gospel-missionaries*, who, during the short repose of the church, had been qualifying for their work, and *dispersing them* through all the neighbouring countries. Had the calm continued longer, while they were so happy in the love and fellowship of each other, they might have been too much inclinable to *build their tabernacles at Jerusalem*, and to say, *It is good for us to be here*: such delightful mutual converse might have engaged them to prolong their abode there to future months, and perhaps years: In mercy to the churches therefore, and even to themselves, whose truest happiness was connected with their usefulness, were they, like so many *clouds big with the rain of heaven*, driven different ways by the wind of *persecution*, that so they might empty themselves in *fruitful showers* on the several tracts of land through which they went *preaching the gospel*.

But *the remainder of the wrath of this cruel Saul*, and the rest of the persecutors, was so *restrained*, in the midst of its career, that *the apostles*, who of all others seemed the most obnoxious persons, were for the present secure in *Jerusalem*; the *power of Christ* wrought secretly for their defence, and, by some unknown operation, either softened or awed the minds of those who (humanly speaking) had it in their power to add their blood to that of *Stephen*. Thus was our Lord's

prediction fulfilled with regard to them, in some of the most pressing dangers that could be imagined, that *not a hair of their head should perish*; and thus was their fidelity and courage approved, by their continued resistance even in this hazardous situation, till Providence gave a further signal for their removal: In this, and in that, they were no doubt directed by supernatural influence, and we may admire their dutiful obedience to those commands, the particular reasons of which we cannot now fully trace.

The continued outrages and cruelties of *Saul*, serve more and more to illustrate the sovereignty and freedom of divine grace, in that conversion which we are hereafter to survey; and give us a view of a very delightful contrast between the warineth of those efforts which he made first to destroy, and then with proportionable zeal to save.

It is also pleasant to observe, how the gospel mutually conquered the prejudices between *the Jews and Samaritans*, teaching the Jews to communicate, and the Samaritans to receive it with pleasure. It was a wonderful providence which had permitted *the enchantments of Simon* to be so successful before; but at length *Simon also believed and was baptized*: We see in this, as in a thousand nearer instances, that there may be *speculative faith* in the gospel, where there is *no true piety*; and if such persons on the profession of that faith, where nothing appears contrary to it, be admitted to *those ordinances* by which Christians are distinguished from the rest of mankind, it is an evil in the present state of things unavoidable; and the conduct of Christian ministers and societies in admitting such, will be less displeasing to God than a rigorous severity. May God give us wisdom to guide our way, that we may obtain the happy medium between *prostituting divine ordinances* by a foolish credulity, and *defrauding the children of the household of their bread*, because they have not reached *such a stature*, or do not seek it in *those forms or gestures* which our mistaken caution may sometimes be ready to demand.

SECTION XVII.

Peter going to Samaria, to impart spiritual gifts there, discovers the hypocrisy of Simon. Ch. viii. 14—25.

14 **N**OW when the apostles, who were *still* at Jerusalem, heard that
 15 many in Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to
 16 them Peter and John; who going down, prayed for them, that
 17 they might receive the Holy Spirit; (for he was not yet fallen on
 18 any of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Je-
 19 sus). Then they laid *their hands* on them, and they received the
 20 Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given
 by the imposition of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,
 19 saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands,
 he may receive the Holy Spirit, *thinking to make advantage of it*.
 20 But Peter said to him, Let thy money go with thee to destruction,
 since thou hast thought the gift of God might be purchased with
 21 money. Thou hast no part nor lot in this matter; for thine heart

22 is not upright in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness; and beg of God, if perhaps the thought of thy
 23 heart may be forgiven thee; for I perceive that thou art in the
 24 gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity. And Simon answered and said, Make your supplications to the Lord on my behalf, that none of these things which ye have spoken may come upon me.

25 When therefore they had borne their testimony to the truth of the gospel, and had spoken the word of the Lord, they turned back for Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans, which lay in their way.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us observe this peculiar honour by which the apostles were distinguished, that *the Holy Spirit was given by the imposition of their hands*. Thus did Christ bear his testimony to them, as the authorized teachers of his church; and it evidently appears, that we may with great safety and pleasure submit ourselves to their instruction; or these extraordinary gifts were intended in some measure for our benefit; that by an entire resignation to their authority, thus attested, we might be made partakers of those graces, in comparison of which the tongues of men and of angels would be but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

Who can read without horror the infamous proposal which Simon made, when he thought of purchasing the gift of God with money? With somewhat of the same horror must we look on all those by whom sacred things are either bought or sold; it is an infamous traffick, about which an upright man cannot deliberate a moment, but will reject it at once with an honest scorn and indignation, like that of Peter in the present instance. God grant that none of the ordinances of Christ may ever be prostituted to secular ends, which seems a crime almost equally enormous! In vain it is for men to profess themselves Christians, in vain to submit like Simon to baptism, or like him to adhere constantly to the ministers of the gospel, if their heart be not right with God; an hypocritical conduct like this will proclaim it aloud, that they are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Wash us, O God, from this odious and polluting gall, which naturally overspreads us; and loosen these bonds of sin with which Satan may sometimes bind those who have a name and a place in thy church, and in which he conveys them to final and everlasting destruction.

Yet let us not utterly despair even of the worst of men, but direct them to that great universal remedy, a deep and serious repentance of their sins, and an earnest address to God by prayer; to him who can wash us from crimson stains, and break in pieces fetters of iron. It is some token for good, when sinners seem to fall under reproof, and desire the prayers of those who are more upright than themselves: But if men are animated in such requests and submissions, by no more noble and generous a principle than a fear of destruction from God, there is great reason to suspect the sincerity of that repentance which they profess, and to apprehend that, like Simon, they will unsay all their confession,

and perhaps like him (if we may credit the most authentic uninspired histories of the church) become open enemies to that gospel which they pretended for a while to believe and reverence.

SECTION XVIII.

Philip instructs and baptizes an Ethiopian Eunuch. CH. viii. 26, &c.

26 **A**ND an angel of the Lord spake to Philip, saying, Arise, and
go towards the south by the way that goeth down from Jeru-
27 salem to Gaza, which is desert. And he arose, and took his jour-
ney : and behold a certain Ethiopian eunuch*, a grandee in the
court of Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, that was over all
28 her treasure, who had come to worship at Jerusalem, was returning,
29 and sate in his chariot reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spir-
30 it said to Philip, Approach, and join thyself to this chariot. And
Philip running up to it, heard him read in the prophet Isaiah, and
said to him, Dost thou understand those things which thou art
31 reading ? And he said, How can I, unless some one should guide
me ? And he requested Philip that he would come up and sit with
32 him. Now the period of scripture, which he was reading was
this : (Is. liii. 7, 8.) " He was brought to the slaughter, as a
sheep, and as a lamb before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not
33 his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away† ;
and who shall declare his generation ? for his life is cut off from
34 the earth." And the eunuch answering Philip, said, I beseech
thee, of whom doth the prophet say this ? of himself, or some
35 other person ? Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from
26 this scripture, preached to him Jesus. And, as they went along
the way, they came to a certain water, and the eunuch said, Be-
37 hold here is water : what should hinder my being baptized ? And
Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, it may lawfully be
done. And he answering, said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the
38 son of God. And he ordered the chariot to stop, and they both
went down to the water, both Philip and the eunuch ; and he bap-
39 tized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the
Spirit of the Lord snatched away Philip‡, and the eunuch saw
40 him no more : for he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was
found at Azotus|| ; and going on from thence, he preached the gos-
pel in all the cities along the coast of the Mediterranean, till he
came to Cesarea, where he settled for a time.

REFLECTIONS.

There is great reason to adore the gracious counsels and purposes of God, with respect to this *Ethiopian eunuch* ; he was a *chosen vessel*,

* The Hebrew word, which answers to the Greek, is sometimes rendered, an officer. Gen xxxvii. 36, &c.

† i. e. His humble station exposed him to injustice : and who can describe the wickedness of that age ? A. [See Bp. Lowth in loc.]

‡ The *Alex.* and other ancient copies read, " The Holy Spirit fell upon the Eunuch, but an angel of the Lord snatched away Philip."

§ Or Ashdod, a city 30 miles from Gaza.

and desiring to improve the weak light which he had, God took effectual methods to impart to him more. Thus *shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord.* An angel of the Lord is sent to give directions to an evangelist to meet him *in a desert*, and to instruct him there, in what he had not learnt in his attendance at Jerusalem; and Philip, in obedience to the divine command, immediately retires from the more public service he had been engaged in at Samaria, to execute whatever God should please to call him to, though he should order him *to go into a wilderness*, as he could even there open a door of opportunity to make him useful: and while, like Philip, we govern ourselves by the intimations of *his will*, we shall *not run in vain nor labour in vain.*

It was a prudent and exemplary care, especially in a person engaged in such a variety of *public business* as the eunuch was, to improve that vacant space of time which a journey allowed him, *in reading* what might edify and instruct him even *as he sat in his chariot.* He chose the *sacred oracles*, and while perusing them, was in an extraordinary manner *taught of God.* The question which Philip put to him, we should often put to ourselves; *Understandest thou what thou readest?* Let us choose those writings which may be worth our study, and then let us labour to digest them, and not rest in the empty amusement which a few wandering, unconnected, and undigested ideas may give us, while they pass through our minds like so many images over a mirror, leaving no impression at all behind them. The *scripture* especially will be worthy of our study, that we may *understand it*; and we should earnestly pray, that this study may be successful. For this purpose let us be willing to make use of *proper guides*, though it must be confessed, that none we are like to meet with at present can have a claim to *that authority* with which Philip taught. It is pleasant, nevertheless, with a becoming humility, to offer what assistance we can to our *fellow travellers* on such an occasion as this; and God grant that we who do it, especially in that way which is most extensive and lasting, may neither be deceived in scripture ourselves, nor deceive others by misrepresenting its sense!

If we enter into the true sense of the *ancient prophecies*, we must undoubtedly see *Christ* in them, and particularly in that excellent chapter of *Isaiah* which the pious eunuch was now reading. Let us often view our divine master in that amiable and affecting light in which he is here represented; let us view him, though *the Son of God*, by a generation which none can fully declare, yet brought to the slaughter as a lamb, and dumb as a sheep before its shearers. And let us learn patiently to suffer with him, if called to it, in humble hope of reigning with him, even though, like his, our judgment also should be taken away, and we be cut off from the land of the living.—Let those who firmly believe in him as the Son of God, enter themselves into his church, by those distinguishing solemnities which he has appointed for that purpose, to which the greatest should not think themselves above submitting. Let the ministers of Christ readily admit those that make a credible profession of their faith in Jesus, and of their resolution to be subject to him, to such ordinances, not clogging them with any arbitrary impositions or demands. And when men are come

to a point thus solemnly *to give themselves up to the Lord*, and have done it in his appointed method, let them *go on their way rejoicing*, even though providence should *separate from them* those *spiritual guides* who have been owned as the happy instruments of their conversion and their edification.—The servants of Christ are called to glorify him in different scenes and stations of life; happy if in one state and country or another they may *spread the savour of his name*, and gather in *converts to him*, whether from among the *sons of Israel* or of *Ethiopia*.

SECTION XIX.

Saul, setting out to persecute the church, is miraculously converted by our Lord's appearance to him. Ch. ix. 1—9.

- 1 **B**UT Saul, still breathing out threatenings and slaughter against
 2 the disciples of the Lord, came to the high-priest, and petitioned for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, that if he found any of that way (*or sect,*) whether they were men or
 3 women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. And as he was proceeding on his journey, and was come near to Damascus,
 4 on a sudden, a light from heaven shone around him, and he fell to the ground, and he heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul,
 5 why dost thou persecute me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus *the Nazarene*, whom thou persecutest. *It is hard for thee to kick against the goads.* And trembling and amazed, he said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall
 16 be told thee what thou must do. (*Ch. xxvi.*) For I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to ordain thee a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast now seen, and of those in
 17 which I will hereafter manifest myself unto thee: delivering thee from the *Jewish* people, and the Gentiles; to whom I now send
 18 thee: to open their eyes, and to turn *them* from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith which is in me.
 7 And the men, who travelled with him, stood astonished, hearing indeed the *sound of the voice*, but seeing no one.—Then
 8 Saul arose from the earth; and though his eyes were open, he saw no man. But they *that were with him* led him by the hand,
 9 and brought him to Damascus. And he was *there* three days without sight, and neither eat nor drank, *but lay part of the time as in a trance, in which he saw some extraordinary visions.*

REFLECTIONS.

Let us pause a little on this most amazing instance of the power and sovereignty of divine grace in our blessed *Redeemer*, and adore and rejoice in its illustrious triumph. Who of all the enemies of Christ, and of his church seemed ripest for *tenfold vengeance*? Whose

name will be transmitted to posterity as the name of the person who most barbarously ravaged the innocent sheep and lambs of *Christ's flock*, and, like the ravenous wolf, most insatiably *thirsted for their blood*? Whose very *breath* was *threatenings and slaughter against them*, and the business of his life their calamity and destruction? Who but *Saul*; the very man for whom, under another name and character, we have contracted (if I may be allowed the expression) that tenderness of holy friendship, that next to that of his divine Master, his name is written on our very hearts; and whom, though once *the chiefest of sinners*, we reverence as *the greatest of the apostles*, and love as the dearest of saints! *Thy thoughts, O Lord, are not as our thoughts, nor thy ways as our ways.* He had *Damascus* in view, which was to be the scene of new oppressions and cruelties; he was, it may be, that very moment, anticipating in thought *the havoc* he should there make, when, behold, *the light of the Lord* breaks in upon them, and *Jesus the Son of God* condescends in person to appear to him, to expostulate with him! And how tender the expostulation? *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Tender to *Saul*, tender to *all his people*; for it expresses his union with them; his participation in their interests; so that he *looks upon himself* as injured by those that injure them, as wounded by those that wound them.

Who, in this view, does not see at once the guilt, and madness, and misery of *persecutors*? They have undertaken a dreadful task indeed, and will find it *hard to kick against the goads*; they will surely find it so when *Jesus appears to them in that vengeance* which he here laid aside; when he sits on his awful tribunal to *make inquisition for blood*, and to *visit upon them* all their inhumanities and all their impieties.—But here our merciful Redeemer chose to display *the triumphs of his grace*, rather than *the terrors of his wrath*; and, behold how sudden a transformation it wrought! Behold *Saul*, who had so insolently assaulted his throne, now *prostrate at his feet*, surrendering, as it were, at discretion; presenting a blank, that *Jesus* might write his own terms, and saying, as every one who is indeed the trophy of divine grace will say, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* As ready to employ all his powers for the service of *Christ* as he had before been to arm them *for the destruction of his church*.

What must the attendants of his journey think, on such an occasion? If they were also converted, here were further witnesses added to Christianity, and more monuments of divine grace erected; but if they were not converted, what an instance was this of their hardness and obstinacy? and even though their bodily sight was continued, how much was *their blindness* worse than his! Let us pray that we may all be *taught of God*; and if we are brought to resign ourselves to God in sincerity and truth, let us acknowledge the internal operations of his grace, as that to which the victory is owing, even where external circumstances have been most remarkable.

The situation in which *Saul* lay, seems indeed to have been very melancholy, *his sight* lost, *his appetite for food* gone, and all his soul wrapt up in deep astonishment, or melted in deep contrition and remorse; but though he might *sow in tears* he *reaped in joy*. It ap-

pears that *light and gladness* were sown for him. He came *refined out of the furnace*, and these three dark and dismal days are, no doubt, recollected by him in the heavenly world, as the æra from whence he dates the first beamings of that *divine light* in which he now dwells. Let us never be afraid of the pangs of that *godly sorrow*, which, *working repentance to salvation not to be repented of*, will soon be ten thousand times overbalanced by that *exceeding weight of glory*, and those full transports of eternal joy for which it will prepare the soul.

SECTION XX.

Ananias sent to restore sight to Saul, who is baptized ; preaches the gospel at Damascus and Jerusalem, and to avoid the rage of the Jews is sent to Tarsus. Ch. ix. 10—31.

- 10 **N**OW there was a certain disciple at Damascus, whose name was Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias :
 11 and he said, Behold I *am here*, Lord. And the Lord said to him, Arise and go to that which is called the Straight Street, and inquire in the house of Judas, for a man of Tarsus, whose name is
 12 Saul ; for behold he is praying : and he hath seen in a vision, a man whose name is Ananias, coming in and laying *his* hand
 13 upon him, that he might recover his sight.—And Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many concerning this man, how
 14 much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem ; and here *also* he hath authority from the chief priests, to bind all that invoke thy
 15 name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way ; for this man is to me a chosen vessel, to bear my name before nations and kings,
 16 and the children of Israel : for I will shew him how many things
 17 he must suffer for my name. And Ananias *immediately* went and entered into the house *where Saul was* ; and laying his hands upon him, he said, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to thee on the way, as thou camest *hither*, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy
 18 Spirit. (*Ch. xxii.*) The God of our fathers hath fore-ordained thee to know his will, and to see that righteous person, and to hear
 19 the voice from his own mouth : For thou shalt be his witness unto all men *to the truth* of those things which thou hast seen and
 20 heard. And now, why dost thou delay ? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, invoking the name of the Lord.—And immediately there fell from his eyes *something like scales* * ; and
 21 he presently recovered his sight, and arose, and was baptized ; and having received food he was strengthened. And Saul was for several days with the disciples at Damascus.—And immediately he preached Christ in the synagogues, *proving* that he is the son of God. And all that heard him were astonished and said, Is not this he who in Jerusalem spread desolation among them, who

* Perhaps the outward coat of his eyes might be scorched with the lightning, and what fell from them might resemble the small scales of fishes.

called on this name ; and came hither *also* to this end, that he might
 22 carry them bound to the chief priests ? But Saul was strengthened
and animated so much the more ; and confounded the Jews that
 23 dwelt at Damascus, evincing that this *Jesus* is the Messiah. And
 when many days were fulfilled*, the Jews conspired to kill him :
 24 but their design was made known to Saul ; and they watched the
 25 gates day and night to murder him. But the disciples took him
 by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket, *by which means*
 26 *he escaped to Jerusalem*.—And when Saul was come to Jerusalem,
 he attempted to associate with the disciples *there* ; but they all
 feared him, not believing that he *who had been such a persecutor*,
 27 *was really a disciple*. But Barnabas taking him *by the hand*,
 brought *him* to the apostles, and related to them, how he had seen
 the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he
 28 had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. *Upon this*
they gladly received him ; and he was with them coming in, and go-
 ing out at Jerusalem, and preaching boldly in the name of the
 29 Lord Jesus. And he spake, and disputed with the Hellenists (*as*
well as with the native Jews) ; but they attempted to kill him.
 30 And the brethren being informed *of it*, conducted him to Cæsarea,
 31 and *from thence* sent him away to Tarsus.—Then the churches
 through all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, being edified, had rest ;
 and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the consolation of the
 Holy Spirit, were multiplied.

REFLECTIONS.

How admirable was the condescension and care of our blessed Redeemer, in sending good *Ananias* thus early, as a messenger of comfort and peace to *Saul* in his darkness and distress ! We cannot wonder at the objections which were at first ready to rise in his mind ; but must surely yield to the great authority by which they were overborne ; *go thy way, he is a chosen vessel*. Thus does it become us to acquiesce in all our Lord appoints, in pursuance of the schemes of his electing love ; and thus should we with *brotherly affection*, like that of this holy man, be ready to embrace even the *greatest of sinners*, when they are brought in humility to a Saviour's feet. But when he is thus glorifying his power and his grace, what gratitude and love may he justly expect from those that are the happy objects of it ? When *the scales are fallen from their eyes*, when they have given themselves up to him in the solemn *seals of his covenant*, when they have received the communications of his *Holy Spirit*, how solicitous should they be to *love much*, in proportion to the degree in which *they have been forgiven* ? And with what zeal and readiness should they *immediately* apply themselves, from a principle of gratitude to Christ, and of compassion to sinners, to *declare that way of salvation* into which they have been directed ; and, so far as they have opportunity, whether

* After his excursion into Arabia. See Gal. ii. 16, 17.

† This repose of the Christians might be occasioned by the general alarm given to the Jews about A. D. 40, upon the order of *Caligula*, to set up his statue in the Holy of holies.

under a more public or private character, to lead others unto that Jesus on whom they have themselves believed!

And now, let us with sacred pleasure behold the progress of grace in the heart of *Saul*: Let us view him *rising from his bed of languishing* with a soul inflamed with love and zeal, *testifying the gospel of Christ*, and *confounding the Jews that dwell at Damascus*. Let us behold him running the hazard of his life there, while their obstinate hearts refused to receive or endure such a testimony; and then *returning to Jerusalem*, desiring to *join himself to the company of those whom he had once despised and persecuted*; and on that most public theatre, under the very eyes of that sanhedrim from which he had received his bloody commission, *openly bearing his testimony to that gospel* which he had so eagerly attempted to tear up by the roots. Thence let us view him travelling to *Tarsus*, and visiting *his native country*, with a most earnest desire to fill *Cilicia*, as well as *Judea and Damascus*, with that doctrine which his divine Master had condescended to teach him, and to be the means of *regeneration* to the inhabitants of the place from whence he derived *his natural birth*.—And while we behold, with reverence and delight, *the hand of God* with and upon him, let us, as we are told *the churches in Judea* did, while he was *by face unknown* to them, *glorify God in him*. In all the labours and writings of *Paul*, the glorious apostle, let us keep *Saul the persecutor* in our eye, still remembering, that (according to his own account of the matter) it was *for this cause* that he, though once *the chief of sinners*, obtained mercy, that in him, as the chief, Christ might shew forth a pattern of all long-suffering to them that should hereafter believe.—Well might the churches be edified by such an additional evidence of the truth and power of the gospel. May the edification be continued to churches in succeeding ages; and while a gracious Providence is giving them rest, may they walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and be daily multiplied, established, and improved!

SECTION XXI.

Peter cures Æneas at Lydda, and raises Dorcas from the dead at Joppa.
Ch. ix. 32, &c.

- 32 **N**OW it came to pass, that Peter making a progress through all parts of the neighbouring country, came also to the saints
33 that dwelt at Lydda. And he found there a certain man whose name was Æneas, who had a palsy, and had kept his bed eight years.
34 And Peter said to him, Æneas, Jesus the Messiah healeth thee;
34 arise and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. And all the inhabitants of Lydda, and of the vale of Saron* saw him, and turned to the Lord.
36 And there was at Joppa a certain female disciple, named Tabitha, who by interpretation is called Dorcas, and she was full of
37 good works and alms-deeds, which she did for the poor. And it

* Or Sharon, a pleasant and fruitful valley. 1 Chr. xxvii. 29, &c.

came to pass in those days, that she was sick and died. And when they had washed her *corpse*, they laid her in an upper chamber. And as Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, entreating him that he would not delay to come to them. And Peter arose, and went with them. And when he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber; and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and mantles which Dorcas *had* made, while she was with them, *for the floor*. And Peter putting them all out of the room, kneeled down and prayed; and turning to the body, he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. And giving her his hand, he raised her up; and having called in the saints and widows, he presented her to them alive. And *this miracle* was *presently* known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. And he continued many days at Joppa, in the house of one Simon a tanner.

REFLECTIONS.

Blésséd apostle! who was thus enabled to imitate his *Divine master*. in what he himself has celebrated as the brightest glory of his human character, in *going about doing good*, and who had always a concern, like him, when he performed the most important offices of kindness to men's bodies, that all might be subservient to the edification and salvation of their souls!—Behold, in what has now been read, not only a *disease*, which a continuance for *eight years* had rendered inveterate and hopeless, but *death* itself yielding to his command, or rather to the infinitely superior power of his Lord, the great *conquerer of death* for himself, and (adored be his compassionate name) for all his people too.. It is most delightful to observe, with what solicitous care of pious humility *Peter* immediately transferred the eye and heart of *Aneas*, and of every spectator, from himself to Christ, while he says, *Aneas, Jesus Christ healeth thee*. He would not leave them any room for a surmise, as if it was by any power of his own that so astonishing a cure was wrought; but leads them to consider it as the act of Christ, and to ascribe the glory of the work to him whose minister he was, and in whose name he spake. Thus, if God favour us as the instruments of healing and animating those *souls* that were once lying in a hopeless state, not only disabled, but *dead in trespasses and sins*, let us acknowledge that it is *not we, but the grace of God that is with us*.

Great, no doubt, was the affliction which the disciples sustained, when so amiable and useful a person as *Dorcas* was taken away from them by death; a person whose heart had been so ready to pity the afflicted, and her hand to help them; a person whose *prudence* and *diligence* had also been as conspicuous as her *charity*; for she well knew there were circumstances in which to have given the poor the value of these things in *money*, would have been a much less certain and suitable benefit, than to furnish them with the necessaries and conveniences of life thus manufactured for their immediate use. And surely the *garments which she made* and distributed, must be more pre-

cious to them in some degree for having passed through so kind a hand. Let us be emulous of such a character, in all the expressions of it which suit our circumstances in life, that when we are dead the memory of our good actions may survive, to the credit of our profession, and to the glory of God.—It was a circumstance which greatly enhanced the value of the intended miracle, that it was to call back from the dead so excellent a person: And with what *humility*; with what *faith* was it performed! Again does the servant follow not only the path but the very steps of his Lord, in *dismissing all witnesses*, that nothing might look like *vain-glory*, that nothing might interrupt the fervour of that address he was to pour out before God. First *he bends his knees in prayer to the Lord of life*, and then he directs his voice with a divine efficacy *to the dead*. So may we, O Lord, learn to address ourselves to those under the power of *spiritual death*, with that spirit and vigour which we receive by solemn and affectionate intercourse with thee, who hast the life of nature and of grace at thy command.

Who can imagine the surprise of *Dorcas*, when thus called back to life again, or of her pious friends, when they *saw her alive*? For their own sakes, and the sake of the indigent and distressed, there was cause of rejoicing, and much more in the view of such a confirmation given to the gospel, and such a token of *Christ's presence* with his servants. Yet to herself it was matter of *resignation* and of *submission*, rather than of *exultation*, that she was called back to these scenes of vanity, which surely would hardly have been tolerable, had not a veil of oblivion been drawn over those glories which her separate spirit enjoyed*. But we please ourselves with a charitable and reasonable hope, that the remainder of her days were yet more zealously and vigorously spent in the service of her Saviour and her God, *yielding herself to him*, as in a double sense *alive from the dead*. Thus would a richer treasure be laid up for her in heaven; and she would afterwards return to a far more exceeding weight of glory, than that from which so astonishing a providence had, for a short interval, recalled her.

SECTION XXII.

Cornelius, being divinely instructed, sends for Peter, who, taught by a vision not to scruple it, returns with his messengers to Caesarea. Ch. X. 1—23.

1 **N**OW there was a certain man in Caesarea, named Cornelius,
 2 a centurion, *being a commander of that which is called the*
 3 *Italian band or cohort*; a man of piety, and one that feared God,
 4 with all his house; giving also much alms to the people, and
 5 praying to God continually. He evidently saw in a vision, about
 the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and
 6 saying to him, Cornelius. And having fixed his eyes upon him
 he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord, *which this meaneth*?

* Perhaps her spirit had not entered the region of glory. E.

And he (*the angel*) said to him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up as a memorial before God. And now, as a *proof of it*, send men to Joppa, and fetch hither *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter : he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side : he shall tell thee what thou must do. As soon then as the angel who spake to Cornelius was gone, he called two of his domestics, and a pious soldier of them that waited upon him ; and having related to them all *these* things, he sent them to Joppa. On the next day, while they were on their journey, and drew near the city, Peter went up to the top of the house to pray about the sixth hour (*i. e. about noon.*) And he was very hungry, and would have taken a little refreshment ; but while they were preparing *it*, he fell into an ecstasy or trance. And he saw heaven opened, and something descending to him, like a great sheet, fastened at the four corners, and let down to the earth ; in which there were all sorts of things, *prohibited by the law* : four-footed animals of the earth, and wild beasts, and reptiles, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, *saying*, Rise, Peter, kill and eat. But Peter said, By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten any thing which is common or unclean. And the voice said to him again the second time, Those things which God hath cleansed, do not thou call common. And this was done three times, and the vessel, or sheet, was taken up into heaven again.— And while Peter was doubting in himself what the vision which he had seen might import, behold the men who were sent from Cornelius, having inquired out the house of Simon the Tanner, stood at the door ; and calling to those within, they asked, if Simon whose surname was Peter lodged there. Now as Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold three men are inquiring for thee : arise therefore, and go down, and take the journey with them without any scruple ; for I have sept them. Then Peter went down to the men who were sent to him from Cornelius, and said, Behold, I am the man whom you inquire for ; what is the cause for which you are come hither ? And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a righteous man, who feareth God, and hath a character attested by all the Jewish people, hath been divinely instructed by an holy angel to send for thee to his house, and to hear words from thee on some important subject, Having therefore called them in, he entertained them that night ; and the next day Peter set out with them : and some of the brethren, who were inhabitants of Joppa, went with him.

REFLECTIONS.

We are now entering on a series of the story in which we ourselves are intimately concerned : We are going to see the first fruits of the Gentiles gathered into the church ; and let us see it with gratitude and delight. Most amiable and exemplary is the character of Cornelius, who, though exposed to all the temptations of a military life, maintained not only his virtue but his piety too. He feared God, and he wrought righteousness : and daily presented before God prayer

and *alms*, which added a beauty and acceptance to each other: And he was also an example of *domestic*, as well as of *personal religion*; as if he had been trained up under the discipline of that heroic general and prince, who so publicly and so resolutely declared before an assembled nation, even on the supposition of their general apostacy, *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*—To him God was pleased to *send the gospel*, and the manner in which he sent it is well worthy of our remark. An angel appeared, not himself to preach it, but to introduce the apostle, to whom that work was assigned. With what holy complacency of soul did *Cornelius* hear, by a messenger from heaven, that *his prayers and alms were come up for an acceptable memorial before God!* They whose *prayers and alms* are proportionably affectionate and sincere, may consider it as a testimony borne to the gracious manner in which an impartial and immutable God regards and accepts them.—Yet after all that they have done, let them learn by the conduct of this devout, upright, and charitable man, not so to rest in their own virtues as to neglect *inquiring after that way of salvation* which God has established by his Son, but always ready to regard it as *the one thing needful*; let them maintain an uniformity in their character, by a diligent and candid attention to the declaration of it in the gospel.

Peter retires for secret prayer in the middle of the day, as if he had learned of *David* to say, *Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud.* He seeks a convenient retirement, and in that retirement the vision of the Lord meets him; a vision mysterious indeed in its first appearances, but gradually opened by divine providence, the process of which renders many things plain, which at first seemed dark and unaccountable. This vision declared to him in effect the abolition of the *Mosaic ceremonial law*, of which the precepts relating to the distinction of meats made so important a part; and we see here with pleasure, that strict as his observation of it had been from his very birth, he was not now disobedient to the heavenly vision, but freely received the uncircumcised, and freely goes to be a guest to one who was so. Thus let us always preserve an openness and impartiality of mind, and in proportion to the degree in which we appear willing to know the truth, we shall find that the truth will make us free.

Nevertheless, as it was an affair about which some difficulties might arise, and some censures even in the way of duty be incurred, he takes some of the brethren with him, that their advice and concurrence in what he did might be a further justification of his conduct, to those who were not perhaps sufficiently aware of the divine direction under which he was. How agreeable a mixture of prudence and humility! Let it teach us on all proper occasions to express at once a becoming deference to our brethren, and a prudent caution in our own best intended actions, that even our good may not be evil spoken of, when it lies in our power to prevent it.

SECTION XXIII.

Peter preaches the gospel to Cornelius and his friends ; who upon believing it, receive the Holy Spirit and are baptized. Ch. x. 24, &c.

- 24 **A**ND the next day, *Peter and the brethren who went with him from Joppa*, entered into Cæsarea ; and Cornelius was waiting for them, having called together his relations and intimate friends. And, as Peter was entering, Cornelius met him, and falling down at his feet, payed homage to him, *as a divine messenger.*
- 25 But Peter raised him up, saying, Arise, I also myself am a man *as thou art.* And discoursing with him, he went in, and found many gathered together. And he said to them, You know that it is *looked upon* as unlawful for a man that is a Jew, to join with, or to come into the house of one of another nation : nevertheless God hath shewn me, that I am to call no man common or unclean.
- 26 Wherefore when I was sent for I came without debate : I ask therefore on what account you have sent for me ? And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting till this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold a man stood before me in bright raiment, and said *to me*, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are remembered before God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter ; he lodgeth in the house of *one* Simon a Tanner, by the sea-side ; who when he is come, shall speak unto thee. Immediately therefore I sent to *thee*, and thou hast done well in coming. Now therefore we are all here present before God, to hear all *those* things which God hath given thee in charge *to deliver.*—Then Peter opening his mouth said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons ; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him. *This is* that message, which he sent to the children of Israel, proclaiming the glad-tidings of peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. Ye know the report there was, through all Judea, which began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached, *concerning* Jesus of Nazareth ; how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power ; who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil ; for God was with him. And *we his apostles* are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the region of the Jews and in Jerusalem ; whom they slew, hanging him upon a tree.
- 40 This very person hath God raised up on the third day, and hath given him to become manifest ; not to all the people, but to witnesses before appointed by God, *even* to us, who have eaten and drunk with him after he rose from the dead. And he hath given in charge to us to proclaim *the glad-tidings* to the people, and to testify that it is he who is appointed by God *to be* the judge of the living and the dead. To him bear all the prophets witness, that every one who believeth on him shall receive the forgiveness of sins by his name.—While Peter was yet speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all that were hearing the word. And

they of the circumcision who believed, as many as came with Peter, were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Gentiles also : for they heard them speaking in *divers languages*, and glorifying God.—Then Peter answered,
 47 Can any one forbid water, that these persons should not be baptized,
 48 who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of the Lord *Jesus*. And they entreated him to continue with them several days.

REFLECTIONS.

There is no room to wonder, that a man of *Cornelius's* benevolent character should be solicitous to bring *his kindred and friends* into the way of that divine instruction, which he hoped himself to receive from the revelation now opening upon him. What nobler or more rational office can *friendship* perform! and how deficient is every thing that would assume such a name, which doth not extend itself to a care for men's highest and everlasting interests.

It must, no doubt, be some prejudice in favour of *Peter* on the minds of these strangers, to see that he declined that profound homage which good *Cornelius*, in a rapture of humble devotion, was perhaps something too ready to pay him. The ministers of Christ never appear more truly great, than when they arrogate *least to themselves*; and without challenging undue respect, with all simplicity of soul, as *fellow-creatures* and as *fellow-sinners*, are ready to impart the *gospel of Jesus*, in such a manner as to shew that they honour him above all, and have learned of him to *honour all men*.—That humble subjection of soul to the divine authority which *Cornelius*, in name of the assembly, expressed, is such as we should always bring along with us to the house of the Lord; and happy is that minister, who, when he enters the sanctuary, finds his people *all present before God*, to hear the things which God shall give him in charge to speak to them, and heartily disposed to acquiesce in whatever he shall say, so far as it shall be supported by those sacred oracles by which doctrines and men are now to be tried.

Well might *Peter* apprehend so natural a truth as that which he here professeth, that *God is no respecter of persons*, but every where accepteth those that fear him, and express that reverence by *working righteousness*. Let us rejoice in this thought, and while we take care to shew that this is our own character, let us pay an impartial regard to it wherever we see it in others, still cultivating that *wisdom from above*, which is *without partiality*, as well as *without hypocrisy*.—We also know that important word which God sent to *Israel*, *preaching peace by Jesus Christ, the Lord of all*. May we know it to saving purposes, and believing in him receive the remission of our sins in his name! May we shew ourselves the genuine disciples of this divine Master, by learning of him, according to our ability, to go about doing good, sowing, as universally as may be, the seeds of virtue and happiness wherever we come! And then, should the treatment which we meet with be such as our Lord found, should we be despised and reproached, should we be persecuted and at length slain, he who raised up *Christ from*

the dead, will in due time also raise up us; having suffered we shall reign with him, and share that triumph in which he shall appear as the appointed Judge both of the quick and dead.

Let us not esteem it any objection against his divine mission, that God did not humour the wantonness of men so far, as to cause him to *appear in person to all the people* after his resurrection; it is abundantly enough that he appeared to such a number of *chosen witnesses*, who were thus enabled to evidence the truth of their testimony by the *demonstration of the Spirit and of power*. Of this, what passed with regard to these converts, when *the Holy Spirit fell upon them*, and they *spoke with tongues*, is an instance worthy of being had in everlasting remembrance. Let us rejoice in this anointing of *the first fruits of the Gentiles*, by which their adoption into the family of God was so illustriously declared; and let us be ready, after the example of *Peter*, whatever preconceived prejudices it may oppose, to *receive all whom the Lord hath received*, from whatever state his grace hath called them, and cordially to own them as *brethren* whom our heavenly Father himself doth not disdain to number among *his children*.

SECTION XXIV.

Peter being questioned about his interview with Cornelius, gives a faithful narration of it, to satisfy his brethren who were under Jewish prejudices.
Ch. xi. 1—18.

1 **N**OW the apostles and the brethren who were in Judea, heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.
2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they who were of
3 the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou didst go
4 in to the house of men, who were uncircumcised, and didst eat
5 with them. And Peter beginning from his vision, opened to them
6 the matter in order, saying, I was praying in the city of Joppa,
7 and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descend-
8 ing from heaven, let down by the four corners, and it came close
9 to me: and looking attentively upon it, I observed and saw
10 four-footed creatures of the earth, and wild beasts, and reptiles,
11 and fowls of the air, *all prohibited by our law*. And I heard a
12 voice saying to me, Arise, Peter, kill and eat: But I said, By no
13 means, Lord, for nothing common or unclean hath ever entered
14 into my mouth. And the voice answered me the second time from
15 heaven, Those things which God hath cleansed, do not thou
16 call common. And this was done three times. And all the
17 things were drawn up again into heaven. And behold at that
18 instant three men were come to the house in which I was, sent
19 from Cæsarea to me. And the Spirit commanded me to go with
20 them without any scruple. Accordingly I went, and these six
21 brethren also went along with me. And we entered into the
22 man's house; and he told us how he had seen an angel standing
23 in his house, and saying to him, Send men to Joppa, and fetch
24 hither Simon whose surname is Peter, who shall speak words to

15 thee by which thou and all thy family shall be saved. And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, even as *it did* upon
 16 us at the beginning of our ministry. And I remembered the word of the Lord *Jesus*, how he said, John indeed baptized with water,
 17 but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Since therefore God gave to them the same gift as *he did* to us, who had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I should be able to
 18 prohibit God, or oppose his pleasure?—And when they heard these things, they acquiesced and glorified God, saying, *It is plain*, God hath then given to the Gentiles also repentance unto life.

REFLECTIONS.

With what joy ought every one who loved God or man to have heard that *the Gentiles had received the word of the gospel*; yet we find *those of the circumcision* disputing with Peter upon the occasion. Their prejudices as Jews were so strong, that they thought the passage to the church must still lie through the *synagogue*, and so remembered that they were *disciples of Moses*, as almost to forget that they were the *disciples of Christ*. Let us always guard against that narrowness of mind which would limit even *the Holy One of Israel* to the bounds which we shall mark out, and exclude others from his favour. that our own honour may appear so much the more signal.—But let us with pleasure observe the mildness and prudence of *Peter*; warm as his temper naturally was, and high as he was raised by the divine favour? though he had been so remarkably turning *the key of the kingdom of heaven* itself, and opening it by immediate divine direction to the *uncircumcised*, that they might enter; yet he stands not upon the general honours of his *apostolical character*, nor insists upon that *implicit submission to him* which some, with no such credentials, have been ready to arrogate to themselves; but he condescends to the *yonger brethren*, and gives them a plain, distinct, and faithful narration of the whole matter, just as it was. Thus let us learn, in the spirit of gentleness, humility, and love, to *vindicate our actions* where they have been uncandidly mistaken. And when we have the pleasure to know that they are *right*, let us enjoy that happy reflection to such a degree, as not to suffer ourselves to be disquieted and put out of temper, by the *rash charges and censures* of those who will judge our conduct before they have examined into it; and are disposed, more to their own detriment than it can possibly be to ours, to err on the severe extreme.—Peter, we see, very circumstantially recollected what he had seen and heard. Let it also be our care to treasure up in our memory, and to inscribe on our hearts whatever God shall be pleased, though in more ordinary methods of instruction, to discover to us; and never let us be *disobedient* to any intimation of the divine will, but, on the contrary, always most cheerfully acquiesce in it. *Who are we, that in any respect we should resist God?* and particularly, *who are we*, that we should in effect do it by laying down rules relating to *Christian communion*, which should exclude any whom he has admitted? O that *all the churches*, whether national or separate, might be led seriously to consider, how arrogant

an usurpation that is on the authority of the supreme Lord of the church! O that the sin of *this resistance to God* may not be laid to the charge of those who, perhaps in the main *with a good intention*, in an overfondness for their own forms, have done it, and are continually doing it!—Like these *brethren of the circumcision*, let us be willing to *yield to the force of evidence*, even when it leads us into an unexpected path; and let us *glorify God*, when he is pleased to *manifest himself to those who seemed to us to have the least room to hope for such a favour*. Whether it be to us or to others *that God hath granted repentance unto life*, may we rejoice in it, and adore his goodness therein! For it is certain that none of the delights of life, which men so fondly pursue, are half so valuable as that *godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation*.

SECTION XXV.

The gospel preached at Antioch: Barnabas confirms the disciples, there called Christians. Agabus foretells a famine. Ch. xi. 19, &c.

19 **N**OW therefore they who were dispersed by the distress which arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but the
20 Jews only. But some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who having entered into Antioch, spake to the Greeks or Gentiles*,
21 preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.
22 And the report concerning them came to the ears of the church that was at Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas to go as far
23 as Antioch. Who, when he was come, and beheld the grace of God, rejoiced, and exhorted them all to adhere to the Lord with
24 full determination of heart; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith: and a considerable number were
25 added unto the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus, to seek af-
26 ter Saul; and finding him there, he brought him to Antioch. And it came to pass that they assembled in the church for a whole
year, and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were by
27 divine† appointment first named Christians at Antioch. And in these days, prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch.
28 And one of them, whose name was Agabus, stood up in one of
their assemblies, and signified by the Spirit, that there should shortly be a great famine over all the land: which quickly came
29 to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar who then reigned. And the disciples determined that, according to the respective abili-

* The common reading, *Ἑλληνισαὶ* Grecians, or *Hellenists* (who were Jews) cannot be the true one. The Alex. MS. and the Syriac read *Ἕλληνες* Greeks or Heathens. Here undoubtedly we have the first account of the preaching of the gospel to the idolatrous Gentiles.—Antioch was the capital of Syria.

† This I think, with others, the Greek word here used implies.

ties of each, they should send to the assistance of the *poor brethren* who dwelt in Judea. And this they did ; sending *their contribution* to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us with pleasure observe, how in the instance here recorded, *the blood of a martyr was the seed of the church* ; an event afterwards so common, that it became a proverb: Thus *they who were scattered abroad* on the death of Stephen every where dispersed the gospel ; and let us be thankful that some of them brought it to the *Geniils* as well as to the *Jews*. Freely did it run, and illustriously was it glorified. But with whatever evidence and advantage they preached it, with whatever spirit and zeal (in some measure the natural consequence of having been called to suffer so dearly for it) the success of all is to be traced up to the *hand of the Lord* that was with them. This engaged men to *believe and turn unto the Lord* ; to stop in their career of sin, to pause upon their conduct, to accept of the Lord Jesus Christ as the saviour, and to consecrate themselves to God through him. O that *his hand* might be with all his ministers ! O that such success might every where be produced by its powerful operations ! Well might Barnabas rejoice when he saw such a scene, and more distant brethren be pleased when they heard of it ; for what is the triumph of the gospel but the triumph of human happiness ? And who, that has cordially received the gospel, does not feel his whole heart most tenderly interested in that ? He wisely and properly *exhorted them*, having once embraced this divine and glorious dispensation, with full purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord ; and there was great need of such an exhortation, as well as a very solid foundation for it. Such difficulties will arise in our Christian course, though we should not meet with persecutions like theirs, that we shall need a most steady resolution of mind in order to our adherence to the Lord ; but let us arm ourselves with it, and hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, since he is invariably faithful who hath promised. Such exhortations as these will be most effectual when they come, as in this instance they evidently did, from a good man, whose example will add authority to his words, and so be a means not only to quicken religion in the hearts of those who have already embraced it, but to propagate it to those who are yet strangers to it.

With pleasure let us reflect upon this honourable name, which the disciples of Jesus first wore at Antioch ; they were called Christians, as it seems by divine appointment : And would to God that no other, no dividing name, had ever prevailed among them ! As for such distinguishing titles, though they were taken from *Apollos*, or *Cephus*, or *Paul*, let us endeavour to exclude them out of the church as fast as we can ; and while they continue in it, let us take care that they do not make us forget our most ancient and most glorious title. Let us take heed, that we do not so remember our difference from each other in smaller matters, as to forget our mutual agreement in embracing the gospel of Christ, and in professing to submit ourselves to him as our common Prince and Saviour.—The notice of the

famine brought to them by *Agabus* the prophet, awakened the generosity of the Christians at Antioch, to supply the pressing necessities of *the saints in Judea*. The possibility at least, that it might have affected themselves, would have led some to conclude it the part of prudence to keep what they had to themselves. But they argued much more wisely, chusing thus *to lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come*, and to secure a title to that peculiar care of divine providence, which is promised and engaged to those *who mind not every one his own things, but each the welfare of others* and of all.

SECTION XXVI.

Herod having slain James, commits Peter to prison who is delivered by an angel. Ch. xii. 1—19.

- 1 **N**OW about that time, Herod *Agrippa* the king laid hands on
- 2 some of the church, to afflict and persecute them. And he
- 3 slew James the brother of John with the sword. And as he saw that *this* was acceptable to the Jews, he went on to seize Peter
- 4 also : and it was in the days of unleavened bread. And having seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to the custody of four quaternions of soldiers *to guard him by turns*, intending
- 5 after the passover to bring him out to the people. In the mean time, therefore, Peter was kept in the prison ; but earnest and continued prayer was made to God on his account by the church.
- 6 And when Herod was ready to have brought him out *for execution*, even that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains ; and the guards before the door
- 7 were keeping the prison. And behold an angel of the Lord presented himself, and a light shone in the house ; and giving Peter a gentle blow on the side, he awoke him, saying, Arise quickly :
- 8 and his chains *immediately* fell off from his hands. And the angel said to him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals ; and he did so. And he saith to him *further*, Throw thy mantle round thee and
- 9 follow me. And going out he followed him ; and he did not know that what was done by the angel was true *and real*, but supposed
- 10 that he had seen a vision. And passing through the first and second watch, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city ; which opened to them *as of its own accord*, And going out, they went *together* through one street of the city, and immediately the angel
- 11 departed from him. And Peter being come to himself, said, Now I know truly that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me from the hand of Herod, and from all the expectations of the
- 12 Jewish people, And recollecting *where he was*, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, who was surnamed Mark ; where many *Christians* were gathered together, praying *for his*
- 13 deliverance.—And as Peter knocked at the door of the outer gate, a maiden whose name was Rhoda or Rose, went to inquire who
- 14 was there. And kowing Peter's voice, transported with joy, she

did not open the gate; but running in, told *them* that Peter was
 15 standing at the gate. And they said to her, *Surely* thou art dis-
 tracted: but she confidently affirmed that it was so. Then they
 16 said, It is his angel or *spirit*. But Peter continued knocking;
 and when they had opened *the door*, they saw him and were aston-
 17 ished. And he beckoned to them with *his hand* to be silent, and
 related to them how the Lord had conducted him out of prison.
 And he said, Inform James (*i.e. the less*) and the brethren of
 18 these things: and departing *thence* he went to another place.—And
 as soon as it was day, there was no small tumult among the sol-
 19 diers, *who made great inquiry* what was become of Peter. And
 Herod searching for him and not finding him, examined the keep-
 ers, and ordered them to be led away to execution *for their negli-*
gence.

REFLECTIONS.

We have now before us the death of *another martyr*, and that mar-
 tyr an *apostle*, and that apostle no less a person than *James the brother*
of John, who was also one of the chosen favourites and companions of
 our blessed Lord; and not the less dear because so early dismissed
 from mortal life and labour, and dismissed by a violent and bloody
 death. He was *slain with the sword*; but that blow, which was hard-
 ly if at all to be felt, in one short moment transported him to his long
 loved Lord, and introduced him to that endeared converse with Jesus in
 his heavenly presence, of which all the most intimate hours spent
 with him upon earth, not excepting that of *the transfiguration* itself
 (to which he was an eye-witness) were but an imperfect shadow.—
 But how strange was it, that *this* should *please the Jews*! To see the
 slaughter of one of the most excellent persons that ever adorned their
 nation, one of the greatest benefactors, his Lord only excepted, that
 ever had appeared in all the list of the prophetic and inspired race!
 Yet thus it was that they proceeded to *fill up the measure of their fa-*
thers; and such was still the hardness of their hearts, that after hav-
 ing *rejected the message*, they soon came to *hate the messengers*, and
 to *thirst for their blood*: The surest token of *wrath coming upon them*
to the uttermost; as indeed it was but a few years more, and such an
 execution was done upon them, as seemed to be the accumulated
 vengeance due for *all the righteous blood which had been shed from Abel*
to James.

Peter was also *imprisoned*, and was bound with *chains*; and no doubt
 the prayers and tears with which the church were contending for his
 delivery, would appear exceedingly despicable to his enemies, if
 known by them; but they found to their confusion, that *his Redeemer*
was strong. The Lord Jesus sent an angel to him, who found him,
 secure in his innocence, and happy in his hope, *sleeping between those*
two guards, who perhaps in a few hours were to have been his exe-
 cutioners, and sleeping so sweetly sound, that the brightness of the
 angel's presence did not immediately awake him. The angel *smites*
him, and his *chains fall off*; the iron gates are opened, and the prison-
 er is set at full liberty. So does the angel of death smite as it were,

but with a gentle blow, the servants of Christ, and the fetters of mortality fall off; the doors of the dungeon are opened, and they are led into *the new Jerusalem*, where they find another kind of society, another kind of rest, another kind of joy, than *Peter* knew, even in the first transports of his deliverance.—The *prayers of the night* were added to those of the day. Pious men and women, the aged and the young, were assembled on this important occasion; and while they were *praying*, God answered; while they were yet speaking, he heard. Behold, *Peter* is himself sent among them, to bring them the astonishing news of that *real deliverance*, which at first appeared to him but as a *vision of the night*. What delight must such a mercy give them; especially when considered as an *answer of prayer*! What an encouragement must it be to them all, to hold fast the *profession of their faith without wavering*, and in every future exigence by *prayer and supplication to make their requests known unto God*. *Peter* was solicitous it might be known to the surviving *James*, and the other *apostles*, that they might glorify God in him, and might take encouragement from it, to go on boldly in the prosecution of their work. With such views should we own the goodness of God in any deliverance he grants us, that others may learn to confide in him, and may join their praises with ours.—*Herod* in his disappointment turns his rage on the soldiers, and makes those unhappy men the victims of his wrath. Unhappy indeed, if they had not learnt from *Peter*, whilst they had him in their power, that lesson which his charity would be so glad to teach them, in what he apprehended to be the last moments of his life, to believe in *Jesus for life and salvation*. But whatever they suffered, a much severer vengeance was reserved for *Herod*, on whom God quickly began to visit that innocent and pious blood which he had spilt, and that too after which he had thirsted; for in his sight he must have appeared the murderer of *Peter*, as well as of *James*.

SECTION XXVII.

Herod makes a public oration, for which he is extravagantly applauded, but for his pride is miraculously destroyed. Ch. xii. 19—24.

- 19 **A**ND *Herod*, after his disappointment in *Peter's* escape, departed
 20 from *Jerusalem*, and passing from *Judea* to *Cæsarea*, abode
 there. And *Herod* was, for some supposed affront, highly incensed
 against the *Tyrians* and *Sidonians*, and intended making war
 upon them. But they unanimously came before him with a peti-
 tion; and gaining *Blastus* the king's chamberlain to their interest,
 they begged for peace; because, having little corn of their own
 21 growth, their country was nourished by that of the king. And
 upon a set day, when a grand assembly was held, *Herod* being ar-
 rayed in a royal habit and seated upon the throne, made an ora-
 22 tion to them, expressing his clemency. And the people, charmed
 with his appearance and address, cried out, It is the voice of a god,
 23 and not of a man. But immediately an angel of the Lord smote

him, *with a grievous disease*, because he gave not God the glory, so as to reject these blasphemous applauses; and being eaten with worms, he soon after expired in agony and infamy. And the word of God grew, and was multiplied.

REFLECTIONS.

The wrath of a king is as the messengers of death; but a wise man (says Solomon) will pacify it: The world generally teaches this wisdom to its votaries, and the ties of interest are felt, when those of affection have but little force. *Tyre and Sidon were nourished by the king's country*, and therefore they sought peace with him. But how much more necessary is it, for all countries and people and princes, to seek peace with the God of heaven, by whom the earth and all its inhabitants are nourished, who giveth rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, and can by his sovereign word turn the heavens into brass, and the earth into iron.—How vain and impious was the applause of this servile multitude, when they were so ready to compliment a mortal man in shining apparel, and on a royal throne, with the title of divinity! and how wretched the infatuation of his mind, when he could receive that ascription without horror, yea even with complacency! Thus do pomp and power, wealth and grandeur, take away the heart of their possessors; but never is a mortal nearer to destruction than when he forgets he is a mortal.—With pleasure no doubt, did this angel of the Lord come down to execute upon this proud and persecuting prince the vengeance due to the honours of God which he had invaded, and the blood of the saints which he had spilt. Let us adore the triumph of the injured majesty of heaven. He was smitten with death, with a death equally tormenting and ignominious; vermin devoured this god; nor could all his robes, his guards, or his physicians, preserve his living body from being as easy a prey to them as the carcase of the meanest slave. Thus is the Almighty Sovereign of the universe known by the judgment which he executeth upon the haughty kings of the earth. Well might the gospel flourish on occasion of such an event; when this royal corpse was (as it were) given for manure to the roots of that vine which he, in contempt of the King of Kings by whom it was planted, had impiously endeavoured to root up.

SECTION XXVIII.

Paul and Barnabas, sent out to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, smite Elymas with blindness, and convert the Roman governor. Ch. xii. 25. xiii. 1—12.

25 **A**ND Barnabas and Saul, having fulfilled their ministry, *in carrying the alms from Antioch*, returned from Jerusalem, bringing along with them John, whose surname was Mark.

xiii. Now there were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers; particularly Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenean, and Manaen who was edu-

2 cated with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them, of
3 *preaching the gospel to the Gentiles.* And having fasted and pray-
4 ed, and laid their hands upon them, they dismissed them.—They therefore being sent out by the Holy Spirit, departed to Seleucia,
5 and from thence they sailed to Cyprus; and being arrived at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogue of the
6 Jews: and they had also John for their attendant. And having traversed the island, as far as Paphos, they found a certain Jew, a ma-
7 gician and false prophet, whose name was Bar-Jesus, that was with the proconsul Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who calling for Barnabas and Saul, desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas, or the magician (for that was his name when translated into Greek) withstood them, endeavouring to turn away the proconsul
9 from the faith. Then Saul (who is also called Paul by the Greeks and Romans) being filled with the Holy Spirit, and looking sted-
10 fastly upon him, said, O thou, *who art* full of all deceit and of all wickedness, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?
11 And behold now the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind and not see the sun for a time, *to convince thee of thy sin and folly.* And immediately a mist and darkness fell upon him; and going about, he sought some *person* to lead him by the hand.
12 Then the proconsul, seeing what was done, believed, being struck with the doctrine of the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

We who were once *sinners of the Gentiles*, and now by the divine goodness are brought to the knowledge of the gospel, have abundant reason to be thankful that inspired messengers were sent to teach it being *separated* to that purpose by the direct appointment of the Holy Spirit. May they that go out to this sacred work in all nations, and in all times, maintain a becoming regard to his influences; and may he *make their way prosperous*! That he may be engaged to do so, it is certainly convenient, upon the justest principles of reason and piety, to *send them forth with solemn prayer*; in which ministers and private Christians should from time to time concur, with an intenseness and seriousness answerable to the occasion.—Wherever the messengers of the gospel go, they must not be surprised if Satan raise up his instruments and children to *oppose them*; especially where they would endeavour to introduce religion into the hearts of *princes*, or other great men. Well does *the prince of the power of the air* know, how dangerous every such blow is to his kingdom. Nevertheless, *the King of Kings* knows how to make way to the hearts of *the greatest* among the children of men; nor can any of them shew a more solid and important prudence, than to inquire impartially into the evidences of the gospel, and to give themselves up to be governed by it; an happy resolution, which they will probably be disposed to form, in proportion to the degree in which they observe

its nature and tendency. For surely every intelligent person that does so must, like *Sergius Paulus*, be struck with the doctrine of the Lord, as well as with the miracles which were wrought to confirm it.

Justly might Paul pronounce that man, who endeavoured to obstruct the progress of divine truth in the world, a child of Satan, and an enemy of all righteousness. Justly might God, who knew all his secret wickedness and perverseness of soul, smite him with a blindness, which, while it rendered him incapable of seeing the light of the meridian sun, seemed but a doleful emblem of that more fatal darkness which, through the corruption of his heart, had spread itself over his mind, and prevented the light of the gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, from shining upon it. Have we not reason to fear, that God may in his righteous judgment punish that iniquity of Spirit, with which many now rise up against the right ways of the Lord (not ceasing to pervert and disguise them, that they may more plausibly and effectually oppose them) with an internal blindness, in which they may wander on to their destruction? And if others stupidly permit themselves to be guided by them, what can be expected but that the blind leading the blind, both leaders and followers should fall into the pit?

SECTION XXIX.

Paul and Barnabas come to Antioch in Pisidia; Paul preaches in the Jewish synagogue. Ch. xiii. 13—42.

- 13 **A**ND loosing from Paphos, they who were with Paul, came to Perga in Pamphilia; but John, surnamed Mark, withdrew himself from them through fear, and returned to Jerusalem.
- 14 Nevertheless, they going on from Perga, came to Antioch in Pisidia, and entering into the Jewish synagogue on the sabbath-day,
- 15 they sat down. And after the customary reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation to the people, speak it. Then Paul stood up, and waving his hand, said, Ye
- 16 men of Israel, and ye that fear God, hearken! The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and raised the people from their prostrate state, while sojourning in the land of Egypt, and led
- 17 them out of it with an uplifted arm. And for the space of about
- 18 forty years he endured their behaviour in the wilderness. And having cast out seven nations in the land of Canaan, he distributed
- 19 their country to them for an inheritance. And after these transactions, which lasted about four hundred and fifty years, he gave them
- 20 judges, till Samuel the prophet. And from that time they desired a king: and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the
- 21 tribe of Benjamin, for the term of forty years. And having removed him, he raised up to them David for a king; to whom also he gave testimony and said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man according to mine own heart, who shall do all my will."
- 22 Of this man's seed, according to the promise, God hath raised up
- 23

24 unto Israel Jesus the Saviour; John *the Baptist* having (to introduce his appearance) before preached the baptism of repentance
 25 unto all the people of Israel. And when John was fulfilling his course, he said, Whom do you imagine me to be? I am not *he*; but behold there cometh one after me, the shoes of whose feet I
 26 am not worthy to unloose. Men and brethren, children of the family of Abraham, and those among you that fear God, unto you
 27 is the word of this salvation sent. For the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and their rulers, not knowing him, nor the sayings of the prophets [*relating to him*], which are read among them every sabbath-day, have *themselves undesignedly* fulfilled them in condemn-
 28 ing him. And though they could find no cause of death in him,
 29 yet they requested Pilate; that he might be executed. And when they had accomplished all things that were written concerning him,
 80 taking him down from the cross, they laid him in a tomb. But
 31 God raised him up from the dead: and he appeared for several days to those that *before his death* came up with him from Galilee
 32 to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses to the people. And we bring you *these* good tidings, that the very promise which was made to
 33 the fathers, God hath accomplished to us their children, in raising up Jesus; as it is also written in the second Psalm, "Thou
 34 art my son, this day have I begotten thee." And because he hath raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he hath said thus *by the prophet (Is. lv. 3.)* "I will give you the sure
 35 mercies of David." Wherefore also in another place (*Ps. xvi. 10.*) he saith, "Thou wilt not permit thine holy one to see corruption."—Now David having served his own generation according to the will of God, fell asleep, and was gathered to his fathers, and
 37 saw corruption. But he of *whom this was spoken*, whom God raised up, did not see corruption. Be it known therefore unto you, men and brethren, that by him the remission of sins is preached
 39 unto you: and by him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. See to it therefore, that what is spoken in the prophets may
 40 not come upon you: "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and disappear (*or suddenly perish*); for I perform a work in your days, a work which ye shall not believe, if any one tell it you." (*Is. xxviii. 14. Hab. i. 5.*) But while the Jews were going out of the synagogue, [*disgusted with Paul's discourse*] the Gentiles desired that these words might be spoken to them the following sabbath.

REFLECTIONS.

That the *scriptures* have been *publicly read* in Jewish and Christian assemblies, from the primitive times, is a noble evidence of their genuine authority, which it will be our undoubted wisdom to transmit to those who are to arise after us. From them, succeeding generations will be fully informed of that *edifying story* which the *apostle* here briefly recounts; of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and their settlement in the land of *Canaan*, according to the promise of God to their fathers; and will also learn the ungrateful returns which they

made to the divine goodness, when they rejected the Lord from being king over them.

The character of David, as a man after God's own heart, who would fulfil all his pleasure, is surely worthy of being emulated by every Christian: In this respect, may he who is feeble among the Lord's people, be like David! Like him may we all be solicitous to serve our generation according to the will of God; to do all the good we can in the age and station in which Providence has fixed us, though it be in a crooked and perverse generation; gradually striving to mend it as fast as we can, and waiting our summons to fall asleep, as we quickly must, and be gathered to our fathers! Were we the greatest princes upon earth, we, like David, must see corruption in the grave: But let us rejoice to think, that Jesus, whom God raised up according to his promise, saw no corruption; and if we are his people, he will ransom and redeem us from it. He, though so outrageously and infamously treated by the Jews, was nevertheless in the most convincing manner declared to be the Son of God, his only begotten Son: Such a resurrection proclaimed him to be so; and in consequence of it, the sure mercies of David are now given us by him; and the plenary remission of all the most aggravated transgressions is through him proclaimed: For ever adored be his glorious name! Most thankfully accepted be his overflowing grace! which frees us from the guilt of those offences which the law of Moses condemned without mercy, and takes out the dyes of scarlet and crimson sins!—Let us take heed lest, if we despise so great a salvation, we meet with an astonishing vengeance; the justice of which will be attested and applauded by the messengers of God to the Jewish and the Christian church: All the prophets, and John the Baptist superior to them all, who bore witness to Christ, and all the apostles and succeeding ministers in every age, have concurred to admonish us of our danger; and they will another day rise up together in judgment against us, if all these admonitions are given in vain.

SECTION XXX.

The Gentiles at Antioch accept the gospel; the Jews reject it, and raise a persecution against the apostles. Ch. xiii. 43, &c.

- 43 **A**ND when the synagogue was broke up, many of the believing Jews, and of the devout proselytes, followed Paul and Barnabas, professing their faith in the doctrine they taught; who speaking to them [further in private] persuaded them to continue
 44 in the grace of God.—And on the following sabbath, almost the
 45 whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God. But the Jews, who continued prejudiced against the gospel, seeing the multitudes, were filled with zeal, and opposed the things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming, reviling these
 46 divine teachers. Then Paul and Barnabas, with great freedom of speech, said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you; but since you thrust it away from you, and adjudge yourselves as unworthy of eternal life, behold we turn to the Gen-

47 tiles. For so the Lord hath charged us *saying*, "I have set thee
for a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation to
48 the ends of the earth." And the Gentiles hearing *these things*,
rejoiced, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as
49 were determined * for eternal life believed. And the word of the
Lord was borne on *as with a mighty torrent* throughout all that
50 region. But the Jews, *provoked at this success*, stirred up *some*
devout women of considerable rank, and the magistrates of the
city, and raised a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove
51 them out of their territories. But they shook off the dust of their
52 feet against them, and came to Iconium. But the disciples *who*
were left at Antioch were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

REFLECTIONS.

It is a great comfort to the *ministers of the Gospel*, that amidst that *incredulity* which too generally prevails, any are found who will *credit it*; any to whom the arm of the Lord is revealed, in conquering their prejudices against it: with a *chosen remnant of these* God will support his faithful servants. O that the instances of that consolation may be more numerous, and remarkable in our days!—It is matter of some encouragement when *numbers crowd to attend upon the preaching of the Gospel*; for *faith cometh by hearing*. They who *reject the counsel of God against themselves*, will no doubt be *provoked* at such a circumstance; and the malignity and envy of their hearts will stir up opposition and contention: But God knows how to *bring good out of evil*; nor should his ministers be discouraged by the *contradiction of sinners*, but rather *turn themselves to those* who may be more willing to hear. In the mean time, let those that *thrust from them the word of God*, know that, in the language of scripture, *they judge themselves unworthy of eternal life*; and since they will not condescend to accept of it on these terms, the great author thereof will not condescend to give it on any other. And the day is coming when we shall see, and the whole world shall see, how much reason they have to glory in that *height of spirit* which they now shew.

Let it be the daily joy of our souls, that *the Lord Jesus Christ was given for a light of the Gentiles*, and for God's salvation to the ends of the earth. Through the tender mercies of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us. Let us pray that it may arise and shine upon the remotest nations. And indeed if we are entirely unconcerned about its *propagation* in the world, we have great reason to fear, that we have ourselves *no part* in the saving benefits which it confers. May the silver trumpet every where sound, to awaken the nations to list themselves in this holy war under Christ, against all the enemies of salvation; and may many appear *determined for eternal life*, and like these converts of Antioch courageously set themselves in battle array against every thing which would oppose their progress towards it! Vain then will all the rage of *persecution* be, by whomsoever it is excited or maintained; though by per-

* The word here used is not any where made use of to express the divine decrees. See a long note of the author upon this passage.

sons of the *highest rank* or the most honoured characters. If the messengers of Christ be *cast out of one place*, they will appear with renewed zeal in *another*: And they who are proselyted to Christianity, though in a *great fight of affliction*, will have the *Spirit of God* and of *glory resting upon them*; and will be enabled to rejoice, not only in the midst of their afflictions, but on account of them. In the mean while, the *dust shaken off from the shoes* of the rejected ambassadors of the Prince of peace will be recorded as a *witness* against those that have *despised their message*, and will expose them to a *final condemnation* in the day of judgment, *more intolerable than that* which was once executed on the cities of *Sodom and Gamorrah*, or which their wretched inhabitants are then to expect,

SECTION XXXI.

Paul and Barnabas go to Lystra, where the inhabitants, struck by a miracle wrought on a lame man, offer them divine honours. Ch. xiv. 1—18.

1 **A**ND it came to pass soon after Paul and Barnabas arrived at Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and spake in such a manner that a great multitude
2 both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the minds of the Gentiles, and filled them
3 with malignity against the brethren: for a considerable time however they continued *there* speaking freely in the cause of the Lord, who bare witness to the word of his grace, and gave signs and
4 wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided; and some were with the Jews, and others with the
5 apostles. But as a violent attempt was made, both of the Gentiles and of the Jews, with their rulers, to injure and to stone
6 them, they having received intelligence of it, fled to Lystra, and
7 Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the adjacent country; and there
8 they preached the gospel.—And there sat a certain man at Lystra, who was disabled in his feet, being so lame from his mother's
9 womb that he never had walked. This man heard Paul speaking; who fixing his eyes upon him, and seeing that he had faith to be
10 healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And
11 he leaped up and walked. And the multitude seeing what Paul had done, lifted up their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language,
12 The gods are descended to us in the likeness of men. And Barnabas they called Jupiter, and Paul Mereury, because he was the
13 leader of the discourse. And the priest of Jupiter, whose image was before their city (*as being their tutelar deity*) brought oxen crowned with garlands to the gates of the place where the apostles were, and would, with the multitude, have offered sacrifice to
14 them. But the apostles Barnabas and Paul hearing of it, rent their mantles through indignation, and ran in among the multitude,
15 crying out and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? we also are mere men, subject to the same infirmities with yourselves, and are come hither preaching the gospel to you, in order that you

may turn from these vanities *which you now worship*, to the one living and true God; who made the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and all things which are in them: who in former generations permitted all the nations to walk in their own ways: though he did not leave himself without witness, doing good, and giving us showers of rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. And saying these things, they hardly restrained the people from sacrificing to them.

REFLECTIONS.

Happy are the ministers of Christ, in the midst of labours and persecution too, if they have the presence of their master with them; and if *the Lord*, as in this instance, *bear witness to the word of his grace*. Almighty Saviour, leave us not destitute of that presence which is our hope and our joy! But *bear witness* with all thy faithful servants, while they are bearing their testimony to thee!—Infinite Wisdom governs those revolutions in providence which seem most mysterious. These repeated *oppositions* which the *apostles* met with in their work, seemed to threaten *their destruction*; but they served in effect to render *their testimony more credible*, when borne in the midst of so many dangers: They served also to exercise the graces of these *new converts*; to add a growing evidence to Christianity throughout the remotest ages; and they were the means of *spreading the Gospel* to a greater variety of places, when the *apostles* were forced to make such short visits at many, through the inhospitality of those from whom they deserved a quite different reception.

The cure of *this cripple* was but one miracle of a thousand which the power of Christ made common in those days; the effect of it one way and another was very remarkable: *The multitude* struck with the exertion of an energy truly divine, by an error to which human nature is, alas! too incident, *fix their eyes on the instruments*, and pay that honour to *mortal men* which was due only to that God by whom that wonderful work was wrought. Yet a mixture of *piety* amidst all that *superstition* cannot but strike the mind with some pleasure joined with the *compassion* we must feel to find it so wretchedly misguided and allayed. When they thought *the gods were come down in human form*, they were desirous immediately to *pay honour to them*. The Lord Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh; but alas, in how different a manner was he generally received! received indeed with outrage and infamy, instead of that *prostrate adoration* to which he had so just a claim.—These his servants with an honest indignation *reject the homage* offered to them, and regard it with horror rather than delight. It was a courageous testimony which they bore to the *vanity* of these *Heathen deities*, while surrounded with adorers and their priests. While they confess *their own infirmities*, as *weak and mortal men*, they with heroic boldness and sacred truth proclaim the one living and true God, the creator and governor of heaven and earth, of the sea, and all that is therein. Let us adore him, as the author of all the blessings of providence, as *giving us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons*; and while our hearts are filled with food

and gladness, let our hearts rejoice in him, and to him let us devote that vigour which we derive from his daily bounty. Above all, let us praise him that we have not *these witnesses alone*, of his presence, his power, and his goodness ; but that he who *once left the nations to go on in their own ways*, has now revealed unto us the path of salvation, and given us *that true bread from heaven, of which if a man eat he shall live for ever*.

SECTION XXXII.

Paul and Barnabas, driven from Lystra, return through Derbe, &c. to Antioch in Syria. Ch. xiv. 19, &c.

19 **B**UT, though these apostles made some converts at Lystra, they were soon interrupted ; for some Jews came thither from Antioch and Iconium, and persuaded the multitude [*to persecute them*]. And having stoned Paul, they dragged him out of the city, 20 supposing him to be dead. But as the disciples were gathered about him, he rose up, and entered into the city ; and the next 21 day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And having preached the gospel to that city, and made a considerable number of disciples, they returned to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch in Pi- 22 sidia, confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and testifying that it is necessary we should 23 enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations. And when they had, *with the concurrent suffrage of the people**, constituted presbyters for them in every church, having prayed to God with fasting, they committed them to the Lord, in whom 24 they had believed. And passing through Pisidia, they came 25 to Pamphylia. And having spoken the word in Perga, they 26 went down to Attalia. And they sailed from thence to Antioch ; from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God, 27 for that work which they had accomplished. And when they were come thither, and had gathered the church together, they related what God had done with *and by* them, and how he had opened a 28 door of faith to the idolatrous Gentiles. And they quietly resided there a considerable time with the disciples.

REFLECTIONS.

Who would value himself upon *the applause of a multitude*, when he sees how soon these changeable inhabitants of Lystra were instigated to assault him as a malefactor, whom but a few days before they were ready to adore as a god, and how easily they were prevailed upon to exchange the instruments of sacrifice for those of murder ? They stone him, and drag him out of the city for dead. And who that had seen this lamentable sight would not have concluded, that here the labours of Paul were ended, and that henceforward we shall hear no more of him in this glorious history ? But God, who amidst all their

* The old English Bible translates it, " When they had ordained them elders by election."

outrage secretly preserved the flame of life from being utterly extinguished, interposed miraculously to heal his wounds and bruises, and on a sudden *restored him to perfect health*. Thus could he awlays have protected his apostles, so that, in a literal sense, *not one hair of their heads should have perished*; but it was more suitable to those wise maxims on which he proceeded in the government of the world, to suffer them at length to fall by their enemies, and to *pour out their blood* as a seal of their doctrine, and of the sincerity with which they taught it; nor could any death be more glorious, or, when taken in its full connection, any more happy.—With pleasure let us trace these holy men in all the stages of their undaunted and successful course; *converting some, confirming others*, and upon the whole, like their divine Master, scattering blessings wherever they come. Let their *exhortation* still have its power with us, to engage our stedfast *continuance in the Christian faith*, through whatever *tribulations* we are called to pass; be the way ever so rugged and painful, let it be enough for us that it leads to *the kingdom of heaven*. Thankfully let us own the divine goodness in *all the assistances* we receive as we pass through it, and particularly in that which all ages derive from the *Christian ministry*, settled in the church by the wise care of its blessed Founder, to be a perpetual blessing to it. May *all the prayers* which are offered for those, who in succeeding generations are *set apart to the work*, in those solemn devotions which usually attend *their ordination* to it, be heard and answered! And may *ministers and people* flourish in knowledge and piety, under the constant care of the *great Shepherd and Bishop of souls*!

The success which attended these *two apostles* in their course, and the pleasure with which they *returned to the place* from whence they had so affectionately *been recommended to the grace of God*, may be an encouragement to our prayers and our labours. Whatever we do in the advancement of the gospel, let us with these holy men acknowledge, that *God does it by us*; and let us pray, that *the door of faith* may be *opened* so wide, that all nations of the earth may *enter in, and be saved*.

SECTION XXXIII.

Some Jewish converts requiring the Gentile Christians to observe the law of Moses, Paul and Barnabas go to Jerusalem to consult the apostles upon that question. Ch. xv. 1—11.

- 1 **A**ND some Jewish zealots who came from Judea to Antioch, taught the brethren there, that it was necessary for them to keep the Jewish law; saying, Except ye be circumcised according
- 2 to the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. There being therefore a contention on this account, and no small debate on the part of Paul and Barnabas against them, they resolved that Paul and Barnabas, and some others of their number, should go up to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, to consult them about this ques-
- 3 tion. They therefore being brought forward on their journey by

- several of the church, went through Phœnicia and Samaria, relating to their fellow-christians the conversion of the Gentiles; and*
 4 *they occasioned great joy to all the brethren. And being arrived at Jerusalem, they were kindly received by the church, and by the apostles and elders: and they related to them what things*
 5 *God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees that believed, rose up and said, That it was necessary to circum-*
cise them that had been converted from among the heathen, and to
charge them to keep the whole law of Moses.
 6 *And the apostles and elders were gathered together to consult*
 7 *upon this affair. And after much debate, Peter rose up and said to them, Men and brethren, you know that some considerable-*
*time since, God among us chose * that the Gentiles by my mouth*
 8 *should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, who knoweth the heart, bare witness to them, giving them the Holy*
 9 *Spirit, even as he did to us: and made no distinction between us*
 10 *and them, having purified their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you tempt God, by imposing on the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?*
 11 *But we believe, that we ourselves are saved not by obedience to the law, but by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the same manner as they are.*

REFLECTIONS.

How early did the spirit of *bigotry* and *imposition* begin to work in the Christian church! that fatal humour of *imposing a yoke on the neck of Christ's disciples*, by making indifferent things necessary. An unmanly and antichristian disposition; which has almost ever since been rending the church to pieces, and clamorously throwing the blame on those who have been desirous, on principles truly evangelical, to stand fast in the liberty with which their divine Master hath made them free. How foolish and how mischievous the error, of making terms of communion which Christ has never made; and how presumptuous the arrogance of invading his throne, to pronounce from thence *dumatory sentences* on those who will not, who dare not, submit to our uncommissioned and usurped authority.—Prudent undoubtedly was the part which these *Antiochian Christians* acted upon this occasion, in sending these messengers to the apostles for their determination: And it will be our prudence, now we can no longer in person consult those *ambassadors of Christ*, to make their writings the man of our counsel, and the standard both of our faith and worship; appealing to the tribunal of Christ, our master and our judge, from those *uncharitable censures* which we may sometimes incur even from his faithful though mistaken servants, for retaining the simplicity of that religion which these authorized interpreters of his will taught.

Great joy was occasioned to the churches through which Paul and Barnabas passed, when they recounted the conversion of the heathen &c O that such joy may be renewed to us, by the success of all who

* God made choice of us. W.—The words *among us* are wanting in the Syriac version.

with a truly apostolic self-denial and zeal go forth at any time to the vast multitudes of the *Gentiles* which yet remain on the face of this uncultivated earth of ours, so great a part of which is yet in a spiritual sense a *wilderness* ! Whatever success *they* may have in one part of our *Lord's vineyard*, or *we* in another, let us all remember it is in consequence of *what God does by us and by them* ; and let us adore the riches of divine grace, to which we owe it, that *we are chosen* to make a part of *God's people* ourselves, and to carry the knowledge and power of his gospel to others.—May our hearts be purified by a vital, and not merely enlightened by a notional faith ! May that *God who knoweth all hearts, bear witness* to us, by giving us his *Holy Spirit*, to seal us to the day of redemption ! And being under the influence of this sacred agent, animated in the most amiable manner to adorn our profession, when we have done all, may we humbly repose ourselves upon the grace of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, as knowing that it is only by the rich and free display of it that, after all our labour, obedience, and care, we can expect salvation.

SECTION XXXIV.

The speech of James, in the assembly at Jerusalem, with their decree in favour of Gentile liberty. Ch. xv. 12—29.

- 12 **A**ND, when Peter had spoken in favour of the liberty of the *Gentile converts*, the whole multitude kept silence, and attended to Barnabas and Paul, relating what signs and wonders
- 13 God had done among the heathen by them. Then after they had done speaking, James the son of *Alpheus* answered, saying,
- 14 Men and brethren, hearken unto me. Simon Peter hath been relating, how God first looked down on the *Gentiles* to take from
- 15 among them a people for his name. And the words of the prophets harmonize with this ; as it is written, After this I will return,
- 16 and will build up the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down ;
- 17 yea I will rebuild its ruins, and set it upright again ; that the remainder of men may seek the Lord, even all the heathen upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord who doth all these
- 18 things.* Now all his works are from eternity known unto God,
- 19 Wherefore I cannot but determine that we ought not to disquiet
- 20 those who from among the *Gentiles* are converted to God ; but only to write to them, that they abstain from the pollutions of idols, and fornication, and from that which is strangled, and from
- 21 blood. For Moses, who has plainly forbidden all these hath, from ancient generations, those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every sabbath-day. So that if the *Gentile Christians* indulge in any of these things, it will prevent that harmony with the Jewish converts which the edification of the church requires.
- 22 Now on this speech of James being unanimously approved, it seemed good to the apostles and elders, and all the church, to send to

* These words, quoted from *Amos ix. 11, 12.* are from the translation of the lxx. who might follow a correcter copy of the Hebrew than the present.

Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas, chosen men from among themselves; namely Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, men of principal account among the brethren, *to add the greater authority* 23 *to the report*; writing by their hand these things *that follow*:

The apostles, and elders, and brethren send greeting to the brethren from among the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and 24 Cilicia.—Forasmuch as we have been informed, that some going out from among us, to whom we gave no commission, have troubled you with discourses, unsettling your minds, saying that *you must* 25 *be circumcised and keep the law*; we, being unanimously assembled, have thought proper to send you chosen men with 26 our beloved Barnabas and Paul; men that have exposed their 27 lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also tell *you* by word of mouth the 28 same things. For it hath seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to impose no further burden upon you beside these neces- 29 sary things; that you abstain from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from any thing, strangled, and from fornication*: From which you will do well to keep yourselves. Farewell.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us adore the divine condescension in *looking with pity upon the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name*. We are that people; let it be our concern, that *as his name is named upon us*, we render it becoming honours, and remember what an obligation it lays upon us to *depart from iniquity*! May the fallen tabernacle of David also in due time be *raised up*, and all its *ruins repaired*! that, when God's ancient people are remembered by him, the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and the fulness of the Gentiles may be brought in. God who hath a complete view of all his schemes, and of all his works from the foundation of the world, will accomplish this also in its season. In the mean time, let us gratefully acknowledge what he has already done. Let us be peculiarly thankful that we are freed from the burdens of the Mosaic institution, and called to a law of liberty. Yet let us take due heed that we do not abuse it to licentiousness. Let us learn from the tenor of this decree, tenderly to regard even the prejudices of our Christian brethren, and to be careful that we do not violently overbear them; but rather that, so far as honour and conscience will allow, we become all things to all men, and be willing in some respect to deny ourselves, that we may not give unnecessary offence to others. Most prudently did the apostles determine this affair, under the influence of the divine Spirit; and whatever hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to them, let us treat with all becoming regard.—The messengers from Antioch, by whom they returned this

* Some suppose this to be added, because the infamy of simple fornication was not so great among the Gentiles as the crime deserved. Others explain it of victims offered by prostitutes out of their scandalous hire. I pretend not to determine the point; but must observe, that taken in the worst sense, it cannot prove the universal unlawfulness of eating blood. Compare 1 Cor. viii. 1, 8, 9.

decree, were persons of an *amiable character* indeed : They had *hazarded their lives* in the service of Christ, and joyfully went on to expose them to new dangers ; thinking themselves, no doubt, exceeding happy in the success of this negotiation, as also in the society of those pious *brethren of the circumcision*, who accompanied them in their return with this letter.—May the blessed time come, when the ministers of Christ, of *all denominations*, laying aside their mutual animosities, shall agree to *study the things which make for peace, and the things wherewith one may edify another* ! Then will *liberty and truth* have a more easy and universal triumph, while *love* melts and cements those souls whom rigorous severity has only served to harden, to disunite, and to alienate.

SECTION XXXV.

The messengers from the assembly at Jerusalem arrive at Antioch ; Paul with Silas, and Barnabas with John Mark, set out to visit the churches they had planted. Ch. xv. 30, &c.

- 30 **THEY** therefore *having received the opinion of the apostles, and*
elders, and church at Jerusalem, being dismissed, came to
 Antioch ; and assembling the multitude of *believers*, delivered
 31 the epistle to them. And when they had read it, they rejoiced for
 32 the consolation it brought. And Judas and Silas and Silas being prophets
 also themselves (*or ministers of great knowledge in the scriptures*) in
 33 a copious discourse exhorted and strengthened the brethren. And
 having made some stay, they were dismissed with peace from the
 34 brethren to the apostles *from whom they came*. But Silas thought
 35 proper to continue there. Paul also and Barnabas continued at
 Antioch, teaching and preaching the good word of the Lord ;
 with many others also.
- 36 And after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, Let us return and
 visit our brethren in all the cities, to which we have preached the
 37 word of the Lord, *that we may inquire* how they do. And Barna-
 38 bas advised to take along with them John surnamed Mark. But
 Paul did not think proper to take with them that person, who had
 withdrawn himself from them, *not in the most honourable manner*,
 from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work *they were*
 39 *now going to inquire after*. There was therefore a sharp fit of an-
 ger *between them*, so that they separated from each other ; and
 40 Barnabas, taking Mark along with him, sailed to Cyprus. But
 Paul made choice of Silas, and departed ; being commended to
 41 the grace of God by the brethren. And he went through Syria,
 and Cilicia, *his native country*, confirming the churches.

REFLECTIONS.

How happy an office had these good men, to go about from one place to another, *comforting and confirming the souls of their brethren wherever they came* ! They had their present reward in the pleasure of it, and are now also reaping in the heavenly world the fruits of *their la-*

bour of love. Deliver us, O thou Father of mercies, from *lording it over thine heritage*, and overbearing the consciences and liberties of our brethren, with whatever secular advantages it might be attended ; and give us to taste at least something of the generous pleasure of these faithful messengers, though it should be with all their labour and persecutions. While we endeavour to *comfort*, may we be also ready to *exhort* and quicken one another. May Christians animate each other in the work and warfare to which they are called ; and may ministers remember, how great a part of their work consists in *practical addresses*, to which, like *Judas* and *Silas* in the instance before us, they should choose to *digress*, rather than entirely omit them.

None can wonder that *Paul* and *Barnabas* were desirous to *visit the churches* they had planted : for it is natural for those who have been spiritual fathers to have a peculiar affection for their offspring, as it also is for *the children which God hath given them* to honour and love those who (as the apostle expresses it) *have begotten them in Christ Jesus*. Happy is it indeed when *the visits of ministers*, animated by such a spirit, are improved to the blessed purposes of advancing the work which divine grace has already begun, and of addressing *cautions* as well as *encouragements* with such affection, wisdom, and zeal, that it may finally appear, *they have not run in vain, nor laboured in vain*.

It is with sensible regret that we read of *any difference*, and much more of a *sharp contention* arising between *Paul* and *Barnabas*, so dear to each other in the bonds both of human and Christian friendship. But we see it arose to some degree of severity, in consequence of a *remainder of imperfection* in the temper of the one or the other, yea, probably of both ; *they separated* therefore, but it plainly appears that they *did not become enemies*. They *preached the same gospel*, though in *different companies*, each taking his proper circuit ; and thus *the work of the Lord* was performed with greater dispatch, and perhaps with greater success, while *Mark* (who afterwards appears, as well as *Barnabas*, to have been restored to the intimate friendship of *Paul*) was, on the one hand, endeavouring to shew that *Barnabas* had not *chosen* an unworthy associate ; and, on the other hand, *Silas* (the fellow-labourer and fellow-sufferer of *Paul*) would take care to behave in such a manner, that this great apostle might have no reason to repent of the preference which he had given to him. To conclude ; we see that both *Barnabas* and *Paul* go to *their native country*. Some peculiar affection to it, when it is not injurious to the general happiness of mankind, is natural and allowable ; and it is certain we cannot shew our love to it in any nobler and more important instance, than by endeavouring to promote the progress and success of *the gospel* in it.

SECTION XXXVI.

Paul and Silas pass through several provinces of the Lesser Asia, and having associated Timothy with them go over into Europe, and arrive at Macedonia, by divine direction. Ch. xvi. 1—12.

1 **A**ND Paul having passed through Syria and Cilicia, he came to Derbe, and from thence to Lystra; and behold a certain
 2 disciple was there whose name was Timothy, the son of a believ-
 3 ing Jewess, but of a Grecian father; who had an honourable cha-
 4 racter given by the brethren in Lystra and Iconium. Him Paul
 5 would have to go forth with him to preach the gospel, and he took
 6 and circumcised him; not as a matter of necessity but of prudence,
 7 on account of the Jews who were in those places; for they all
 8 knew his father, that he was a Greek. And as they passed through
 9 the cities, they delivered to their custody, a copy of the decrees,
 10 which were determined by the apostles and elders that were at Je-
 11 rusalem. The churches therefore were confirmed in the faith,
 12 and increased in number daily. And they went through Phrygia
 and the region of Galatia; and after this being forbidden by the
 Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia*, when they were to come
 to Mysia, they attempted to go to Bithynia; but the Spirit (of Je-
 sus†) did not permit them. And passing by Mysia, they went
 down to Troas. And here a vision appeared to Paul in the night:
 There stood a certain Macedonian, entreating him, and saying:
 “Come over to Macedonia, and help us.” And as soon as he had
 seen this vision, we† immediately endeavoured to go to Macedo-
 nia; assuredly inferring, that the Lord called us to preach the
 gospel to them. Setting sail therefore from Troas, we ran direct-
 ly to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis, and came from
 thence to Philippi, which is a city of the first part of Macedonia;
 and a Roman colony: and we continued in this city for some days.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us with pleasure observe the prudent condescension of the apostle Paul, in becoming all things to all men, and particularly, to the Jews as a Jew; that he might gain the Jews; for this purpose circumcising his companion Timothy, that he might give them no unnecessary offence. Nor was the condescension and zeal of this pious youth to be less esteemed, who was willing to submit, not only to that painful rite, but to all the yoke of ceremonial observances to which he was obliged by it, in a view to usefulness in the church. Well may it expect eminent service from those ministers of the rising generation, that set out with such a spirit; while, on the other hand, when

* That is, the *proconsular Asia*: the places before mentioned being in *Asia Minor*.

† So it is in many ancient readings, versions, and quotations.

‡ Here Luke, the writer, who attended these apostles, speaks in his own person.

a fierce and haughty sense of liberty is the reigning, darling character, and a determination is formed to submit in nothing, to oblige in nothing; as the first elements of the Christian temper seem as yet to be unknown, there is great reason to believe, that the doctrines and precepts of the gospel will not, cannot be successfully taught; great reason to fear that such instructors will have their reward in the empty applause which they give to themselves and each other; while they brand those who are solicitous to become wise that they may win souls, with reproaches which God will remember in the day when he will judge the secrets of all hearts; and will find many of them far different from what such rash men have presumed to pronounce them.

Indefatigable were the journeys and labours of these ambassadors of Christ; they travelled through wide-extended regions, and sowed the seeds of knowledge and of life wherever they came, and God gave the increase. But the œconomy of divine providence was very remarkable, in not permitting them to preach in Bithynia, and forbidding them to do it in Asia. What were the particular reasons of this determination we know not; perhaps the inhabitants of these places were remarkably conceited of their own wisdom; perhaps they had treated the flying reports of the gospel with contempt; or, possibly, without any particular displeasure against them, their visitation might be delayed in a view to more general good. But happy was it for Galatia, Phrygia, and the neighbouring parts, that they were not included in the prohibition. And happy is it for this sinful land of ours, that the abused, insulted gospel, is not taken away, and that its ministers are not one way or another forbidden to repeat those offers, which have so long been rejected and despised. The visit of a Macedonian imploring the help of the apostle, was justly regarded by him and his associates as an intimation of the divine pleasure that they should pass over thither. And surely, did those nations of the earth that have not yet received the gospel, know in the general how great a blessing it is, instead of opposing those messengers of it who might offer to spread it among them, they would rather in the most pressing manner urge and entreat their presence, and with the greatest joy sit down at their feet. May they who are intrusted with this glorious embassy imitate the pious zeal of these holy men, and be willing, when called by providence, to cross land and seas on so pious and so charitable an errand.

SECTION XXXVII.

Paul and Silas preach at Philippi, and cast out a spirit of divination from a damsel: they are thrown into prison, and the jailor is converted. Ch. xvi. 13—34.

- 13 **A**ND on the sabbath-day, we went out of the city of Philippi, to the side of the river, where, according to the Jewish custom, there was an oratory or place of public prayer; and sitting
14 down, we spoke to the women that were assembled there. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, a native of the

city of Thyatira, a worshipper of God, heard *the discourse* ; whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things which were spoken by Paul. And when she was baptized with her family, she entreated us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, enter into my house, and continue *there*. And she even compelled us.—Now it came to pass, that as we were *one day* going to the oratory, we were met by a certain girl that had a Pythonic spirit (*or spirit of divination**) who brought her owners much gain by her *pretended* prophesying : the same following after Paul and us, cried out, These men are the servants of the most high God, who declare unto you the way of salvation. And this she did for several days. But Paul being grieved *lest he should be suspected of a confederacy with her*, turned and said to the spirit, I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ, to go out of her. And it went out that very hour.—But when her owners saw that the hope of their gain was gone, laying hold of Paul and Silas, they dragged them to the market-place to the magistrates ; and having brought them to the officers, they said, These men, being Jews, disturb our city *in an unsufferable manner*, and teach customs, which it is not lawful for us, as we are Romans, to receive and observe. And the populace rose up together against them ; and the officers tearing off their garments, commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely. Who having received such a strict charge, threw them into the inner prison, and secured their feet fast in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas having prayed, sung an hymn to God : and the *other* prisoners heard them. And on a sudden there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken ; and immediately all the doors were opened, and the bonds of all the prisoners were loosed. And the jailor awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the doors of the prison opened, drew his sword, and was going to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners were fled, *and that he should be punished*. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm, for we are all here. And upon this he called for lights, and sprung in ; and being in a dreadful tremor, fell down before Paul and Silas : and bringing them out from the inner prison, he said, Oh sirs, what must I do that I may be saved ? And they said to him, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thine house. And they spake to him, and to all that were in his house, the word of the Lord. And taking them that very hour of the night, he washed their stripes ; and on a profession of faith, was immediately baptized, himself and all his family. And having afterwards brought them into his house, he spread the table before them ; and believing in God with all his house, he was transported with joy.

* Supposed to be an inspiration from Apollo, called *Pithius*.

REFLECTIONS.

We see remarkably, in this period, by what *various methods* divine grace operates upon different persons. As for *Lydia*, she was touched by a *gentle influence*, descending upon her like *dew* from heaven ; her heart was melted under the word, as snow by the sun, and by the *soft yet powerful hand* of our blessed Saviour, was made *willing* and obedient. But when the Lord came to subdue the *stubborn heart* of the savage jailor, who seems to have taken a barbarous pleasure in afflicting his pious prisoners, he came in the *whirlwind*, the *tempest*, and the *fire*. His soul, as well as his house, was shaken with an *earthquake*, and the foundations as it were laid bare. A sudden transport of *astonishment* convinces him of his extreme danger. His hand is mercifully stopped in that terrible moment in which he was rushing on to seek a refuge in hell from the seeming dangers of earth ; and being taught by a *secret grace* which he had not as yet been instructed to seek, he falls down before *Paul and Silas*, honouring them as among the first of mankind, whom he had just before treated, not only as slaves, but as the *worst of villains* ; yet he is now ready to receive the law and the gospel from their mouth, seeking the way of salvation from them, and declaring his readiness to submit to whatsoever they should tell him. What unutterable delight must it afford to these afflicted servants of Christ, when they saw this *astonishing change* ! Surely it appeared that their prayers and their praises came up in remembrance before God. They had, with a serene conscience and joyful heart, been singing praises to God in the stocks, and behold, new matter of praise is given them, and in the midst of all their sufferings new songs are put into their mouth, and new occasions for thanksgiving pour in upon them. Those bonds which, however pondrous in themselves, sat so light upon them, are now miraculously loosened ; and the far more infamous and dangerous bonds which Satan had fastened upon these sons of persecution and violence, fall off too. The awakened jailor asks the question of all others the most important, and asks it with an earnestness and respect that witnesses its sincerity, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved ?*

Gracious God, to whose efficacious influence the most obdurate heart must submit, awaken multitudes who, like this once wretched sinner, but now beloved and triumphant saint, are insensible of their danger and misery ; that seeing themselves perishing, they may inquire after salvation ! And may it please thee, to put a faithful word into the mouth of thy ministers, that they may all join in directing such awakened souls to believe in Christ, and trust to him for salvation ! When they are brought to this they may well rejoice ; and however their hearts may be enlarged towards those who have been the instruments of this blessed change, none of the effects of their tenderness or generosity can afford a pleasure comparable to that, which they shall find in the consciousness of having rescued souls from eternal death, and conducted them into the way of salvation.

SECTION XXXVIII.

Paul and Silas honourably dismissed by the magistrates of Philippi, on insisting upon their privilege as Romans. Ch. xvi. 35, &c.

35 **A**ND when it was day, the magistrates of *Philippi*, having been
terrified by the earthquake, sent the lictors or beadles, say-
36 ing, Dismiss those men. And the keeper of the prison told these
things to Paul, saying to him, The magistrates have sent that you
may be dismissed ; now therefore go out and pursue your journey
37 in peace. But Paul, calling for the beadles, said to them, They
have beaten us who are Romans, publicly and uncondemned, and
have cast us into prison ; and do they now thrust us out pri-
vately ? By no means : but as their proceedings have been illegal,
38 let them come themselves and conduct us out honourably. And
the beadles reported these words to the magistrates. And when
they heard that they were Romans who had been thus used, they
39 were afraid : and they came and comforted them ; and conduct-
ing them out in a respectful manner, requested that they would
40 peaceably depart from the city. And coming out of the prison,
they entered into the house of *Lydia* ; and when they had seen the
brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

REFLECTIONS.

We have seen *Paul and Silas* suffering, not for doing evil but good ; for great good undoubtedly it was, to cast out the demon which possessed the young woman, of whom we have been reading, and made her an instrument of mischief, though to her mercenary masters a means of gain. Could she indeed have foretold future events, as perhaps she very falsely pretended, it had been a curse rather than a benefit to mankind to know them ; but it is exceedingly probable that this evil spirit, being himself unacquainted with them, did, like many of his brethren, only delude his votaries with ambiguous answers, which proved the occasion of false expectations, and numerous inconveniences. At least, it diverted them from all proper regards to the true God, the supreme disposer of all events, and confirmed them in their unhappy attachment to those which are by nature no Gods, to those vain idols, by a regard to whom Satan was honoured, and the living Jehovah injured and affronted.—Wisely did *Paul*, in imitation of his master, refuse applause from so impure a tongue. Yet with what consistency could these Heathens persecute him ? If this damsel spake under a divine direction, why should she not be credited, when she testified, that these were servants of the true God, that taught the way of salvation ? If they were indeed so, how absurd, how impious, and how dangerous must it be, to treat them with outrage, instead of reverence ! What an affront to God ! What defiance of salvation ! If *Apollo* was indeed any thing more than an empty name, if he was judged to have any power and any deity, what regards were owing to that *Jesus of Nazareth*, who appeared so much superior, that *Apollo* fled at his very name ! but the god of this world had blinded

their eyes, and reason and conscience remonstrated in vain, so long as *the hopes of gain* lay the opposite way. Deliver us, O Lord, from such fatal madness, and teach us, how much more valuable *salvation* is, than any *worldly interest* which must be sacrificed to it !

The ministers of Christ, *Paul and Silas*, had been injured in their reputations, and abused in their persons ; and in this instance, as in many others, were *treated like the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things*, while *the ploughers ploughed upon their back, and made long furrows*. The plea of *privilege*, amidst so tumultuous a multitude, might have been in vain, and therefore was for the present *prudently waved* ; but it was justly afterwards urged, and *the magistrates* challenged for their *arbitrary proceedings*, before they knew who and what they were, and required to *attend upon them in person*, to acknowledge and atone for their fault. Here was a true magnanimity, proceeding not from pride but from humanity. Their reputation as *ministers of Christ* was worthy of a guard, and worthy of some reparation where it had received so notorious an insult. The rashness of *the magistrates* was also worthy of being rebuked and mortified ; which might have proved an occasion of suffering to *other innocent persons*, had not this instance of it been animadverted upon ; yet *no revenge* was sought, nor were they, as some have been in the like case, laid under a necessity of *buying their peace*, to avoid a prosecution which might have ended in their ruin. *Paul* knew how to join the tenderness of *the Christian* with the dignity of *the Roman citizen*, and contended for *his own rights* no further than that very contention might be an act of general goodness. Let us *go and do likewise*. Let us learn, even from the example of *these unjust rulers*, to be willing to *hear reason and truth* from those who seem most our inferiors, and *openly to retract* any ill-concerted steps which we may have taken ; especially, let us be willing to make the *best reparation* in our power to the innocent and the deserving, if through imprudent heat, or weak credulity, we have been engaged in any degree to injure them.

SECTION XXXIX.

Paul preaches at Thessalonica and Berea, but is driven away by the unbelieving Jews. Ch. xvii. 1—15.

- 1 **A**ND *Paul and Silas*, having quitted *Philippi*, taking their journey through *Amphipolis* and *Apollonia*, they came to
- 2 *Thessalonica*, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And according to Paul's custom, he entered in among them, and dis-
- 3 coursed to them for three sabbaths, from the scriptures ; opening *them*, and evidently shewing that the Messiah ought to suffer, and to rise from the dead ; and that " This is the Messiah, even Jesus,
- 4 whom, said he, I declare unto you." And some of them believed, and adhered to Paul and Silas ; and a considerable number of
- 5 the devout Greeks, and not a few of the principal women. But the unbelieving Jews, filled with zeal, gathered together some mean and profligate fellows, and making a mob, threw the city

into a tumult ; and assaulting the house of Jason, *where Paul and his companions lodged*, endeavoured to bring them out to the people. But not finding them, they dragged out Jason, and some of the brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, These men that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also ; and *this* Jason has privately received them. And all these men act contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying, that there is another king, *one* Jesus. And they alarmed the multitude, and the magistrates of the city, when they heard these things. And having taken security of Jason, and the rest, they dismissed them. But the brethren *perceiving their danger*, immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night to Berea : and when they came *thither* they went into the synagogue of the Jews. And *they found that these people* were of a more generous disposition than those of Thessalonica : for they received the word with all readiness of mind, daily examining the *old-testament* scriptures to see whether those things were so as Paul and Silas taught. Many of them therefore believed ; and of the Grecian women of considerable rank, and of the men not a few.—But as soon as some of the Jews of Thessalonica understood that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came thither also, raising a storm among the populace. And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul, as if he were to go by sea. But Silas and Timothy continued there *a while longer*. And they that conducted Paul, brought him *by land* as far as Athens, *a famous seat of learning*. And having received an order from him to Silas and Timothy, that they should come to him as soon as might be, they went away.

REFLECTIONS.

With how much grace and propriety might the apostle say, of bonds and imprisonments, in the most grievous circumstances that could attend them, *None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.* He gave a remarkable proof of this heroic temper, when having (as he himself expresses it) *been shamefully treated at Philippi*, he was bold in his God to preach the gospel of God at Thessalonica too, though it were with much contention, through the perverse opposition of these unbelieving Jews.—He boldly declared to them, and proved it by unanswerable evidence, that the Messiah whom they so eagerly expected, and of whose temporal kingdom they so fondly dreamt, must, in order to establish his claim from the accomplishment of prophecies, suffer, and rise from the dead. And then he shewed, agreeably to these important premises, that Jesus whom he preached to them was that very person ; but instead of receiving his testimony with thankfulness, and the word of God with obedience, what iniquity and obstinacy of heart did these Jews shew ! Unhappy nation, who, as Paul most justly speaks of them, *having killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, persecuted the apostles also ; not pleasing God, and being contrary to all men ; forbidding, so far as in them lay, the appoint-*

ed messengers of this glorious salvation to preach to the Gentiles that they might be saved; thereby, alas, filling up the measure of their iniquities, till wrath came upon them to the uttermost, and avenged at once the blood of Christ and that of his ministers, whom they had slaughtered, and those immortal souls whom they had laboured to destroy.

Their blind and furious zeal for the law, to which, after all, the apostles did a much greater honour than they could possibly do, engaged them to list under their banners the vilest and most infamous of mankind, *certain lewd fellows of the baser sort*, the pitch of whose understandings, as well as the turn of their tempers, rendered them the proper tools upon such occasions. And these profligate wretches themselves, the reproach and the plague of mankind, are the persons into whose mouth *that senseless cry* against the apostles was to be put, *that they turned the world upside down*. Competent judges indeed of the interests of society, and worthy guardians of its peace!—Such charges, we see, may be brought against the most innocent, the most benevolent, and the most useful of mankind. Thus was Paul accused by Tertullus, as a *pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition throughout the world, and a ringleader of one of the most pernicious sects* that ever appeared in it: Nor did Jesus, our divine Master, escape; but was accused, condemned, and executed, as a *traitor to Caesar* and to his country. But could these clamorous creatures have thought of proof, where would they have been able to find it? If to testify the truth which God had given them in charge; if to exhort to universal love; if to command men that they should study to be quiet, and do their own business, that if it were possible, as much as lay in them, they should live peaceably with all men, doing good to all as they had opportunity; if to enforce these exhortations by the strongest arguments, the warmest exhortations by the most amiable examples; if thus to teach, and thus to act, were turning the world upside down, the apostles were indeed the subverters of it: But O, who would not pray for the happy time, when the world should be thus subverted!

Let the claims of Jesus to universal monarchy be rightly understood, and Caesar shall find nothing contrary to his just decrees, but every thing subservient to his truest interest. The Redeemer's kingdom is not of this world; nor can the just rights both of princes and subjects be ever so effectually established, as by a submission to him. May the kings of the earth be so wise as to know this, and all under their government so happy as seriously to consider it.—Security was taken of Paul's friends, and it was prudent in the magistrates to carry it no further. The apostle himself was obliged immediately to quit them, under the shelter of the night, with a heart full of tender solicitude for these new converts; yet he did not reflect upon his journey to Thessalonica with regret, but amidst all the difficulties he met with, was (as he afterwards tells them) incessantly thanking God on their account, because they received the gospel which they heard of him, not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, and became followers of the churches of God elsewhere. Providence brought him in safety and liberty to Berea, and here he met with a more candid

reception. The *Bereans* shewed a true nobleness of spirit, for they received the word with readiness, and searched the scriptures daily, that they might judge for themselves, whether things were there as Paul represented them. While the ministers of Christ are faithful and skilful in the execution of their office, they will not desire that what they say should be received with an *implicit subjection*; but will be contented, will be solicitous, it should be tried by the standard of scripture. To this touchstone may our doctrines and exhortations be honestly brought, and let them always be received or rejected as they are found agreeable or disagreeable to it.

SECTION XL.

Paul, while at Athens, deeply affected with the idolatry of that learned city, makes an excellent discourse to the philosophers. Ch. xvii. 16, &c.

16 **N**OW while Paul was waiting for *Silas and Timothy* at Athens,
 17 his spirit within him was strongly moved when he beheld
 17 the city enslaved to idolatry. He therefore discoursed in the
 synagogue to the Jews, and to the other pious persons that wor-
 shipped with them, on their sabbath-days; and every day in the
 18 forum or market-place to those whom he met with there.—But
 some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers opposed themselves
 to him: and some said in a scornful manner, What will this re-
 tailer of scraps say? And others, He seems to be a proclaimer of
 foreign deities; because he preached to them *Jesus* and the re-
 19 surrection.—And they took him, and conducted him to the *Areo-*
*pagus**, where they accosted him, saying, May we know what this
 20 new doctrine is, which is spoken by thee? for thou bringest some
 strange things to our ears: we would therefore know what these
 21 things mean? For all the Athenians, and the strangers that so-
 journ among them, delight to spend their leisure time in nothing
 22 else but telling or hearing somewhat new.—Paul therefore, stand-
 ing up in the middle of the *Areopagus*, said, Ye men of Athens,
 I perceive you are exceedingly addicted to the worship of invisi-
 23 ble power†. For as I passed along, and beheld the objects of
 your worship, I found an altar on which there was this inscription,
 “To the unknown God.” Him therefore, whom ye worship
 24 without knowing him†, do I declare unto you. The God, who
 made the world, and all things that are therein, being the
 Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with
 25 hands: neither is he served by human hands, as if he stood in
 need of any thing; he himself giving to all life, and breath, and
 26 all things. And he hath made of one blood the whole nation of
 men, to inhabit all the face of the earth, having marked out the
 times fore-allotted to each, and the boundaries of their habitations;

* Or, Mars-hill, the supreme court of Athens.

† To charge them with *superstition or ignorance*, would not suit the decorum which such a well-bred man as Paul would doubtless maintain before this polite assembly.

27 that they might seek after the Lord, if possibly they might find after him and find him; though he be not far from every one of us:
 28 for in him we live, and are moved, and do exist; as some of your
 29 own poets * have said:—"For we his offspring are." We therefore, being the offspring of God, ought not to imagine the Deity to be like gold, or silver, or stone wrought by the art and contrivance of man. For though God overlooked the times of ignorance, he now chargeth all men to whom his gospel comes, every
 30 where to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, *Jesus Christ*; of which he hath given assurance to all
 31 men by raising him from the dead.—And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some made a jest of it, and others said,
 32 We will hear thee again upon this subject. And thus Paul went out of the midst of them, *leaving the greater part of this learned*
 33 *auditory as he found them.* Nevertheless some men adhered to him, and *after further inquiry* believed; among whom was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman whose name was Damaris, and some others with them, *who will hereafter be mentioned.*

REFLECTIONS.

Adored be the depths of divine counsel and grace, that when *in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by what they impiously derided as the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.* Whose spirit is not stirred in some measure, to behold the learned and polite city of *Athens*, not only abandoned to trifling speculations, but enslaved to idolatry and superstition? And, on the other hand, who can be so insensible of all the charms of reason and true eloquence, as not to be delighted with those prudent and generous attempts which *Paul* made to recover them from it? When derided and affronted as a *vain babbler*, as a *retailer of scraps*, by those who indeed shewed themselves to deserve that infamous name, *judging a matter before they heard it*, and so convicting themselves of *shame* and folly, he, in the meekness of wisdom, addresses himself to them with that *soft tongue which breaketh the bones.* His doctrine dropped as the rain, and his speech distilled as the dew: Pity it was that it produced no more valuable fruits, but rather was abused by some that heard it, to nourish those poisonous weeds which were, alas, the native growth of this luxuriant soil.

We see, that while *Paul* passed through the streets of *Athens*, his mind was filled with such pious and benevolent affections as became the mind of a Christian and an apostle; and beholding this inscription to the unknown God, he applies himself immediately to declare him to them. Adored be the divine goodness, that we are from our infancy happy in the use of such divine instructions as he gave the *Athenians* and others; and that though we worship a God whose infinite perfections can never be traced out, he is not entirely an unknown deity to us! May he be known, adored, and obeyed, wide as the

* ARATUS, and CLEANTHES in his Hymn to Jupiter.

works of his hand extend ! Even he, the supreme *Lord of all*, who made heaven and earth, and all that is in them ; in consequence of which he is infinitely superior to all our most exalted services, as well as beyond any of those *representations* of him which the ignorance and folly of men have invented in *gold, silver, and stone*. His power created all, and by his goodness all are supported. Let us consider ourselves as *his offspring*, honouring and loving him as the great *Father of our Spirits* ; and since we have so necessary and uninterrupted a dependance upon him, since *in him we live, and move, and exist* continually, let all the affections of our hearts, and all the actions of our lives, be consecrated to his service : And this so much the rather, as it evidently appears, by the revelation of his gospel, that he does not overlook us, but in the most solemn manner *calls upon us*, and upon *all men every where to repent*, and to return to him ; setting before us in so clear a view the awful solemnity of *that appointed day*, in which he will judge the whole world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained to this glorious purpose, even by *Jesus*, to whom, as the Son of man, all judgment is wisely and righteously committed. The Lord grant that we may all find mercy of the Lord in that day ! In the mean time, may the declaration of it bring multitudes to repentance and faith ; and especially may it work thus on those who, like *Dionysius* and *Damaris*, are distinguished by their rank and circumstances in life, that their *usefulness* in the world may be as extensive as their *influence*, and their names precious in the church among those that are yet unborn.

SECTION XLI.

Paul settles at Corinth, is encouraged by a vision of Christ, and rescued by Gallio from the rage of the Jews. Ch. xviii. 1—17.

- 1 AFTER these things, Paul departing from Athens, came to the
- 2 city of Corinth ; and finding there a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, lately come from Italy, with Priscilla his wife (because Claudius *Cæsar* had commanded all the Jews to
- 3 depart from Rome) he went to lodge with them. And as he was of the same trade, he continued with them, and wrought at it ; for they were tent-makers, and Paul had been instructed in that art*.
- 4 But he disputed in the synagogue every sabbath-day, and persuaded both the Jews and the Greeks to embrace Christianity, not without
- 5 some success†. And as soon as Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul was borne away in his spirit by an unusual impulse,
- 6 and openly testified to the Jews, that Jesus was the Messiah. But when they set themselves in opposition to his doctrine, and blasphemed, he shook his garment, and said to them, Let your blood be upon your own head ! I am pure from it. From henceforth I

* It was usual for the Jews of all classes to be brought up to some mechanical employment.

† *Stephanus* and *Ephænetus* were some of his first converts here. *Rom. xvi. 5.* 1 *Cor. i. 14, 16.* *xvi. 15.*

- 7 will go to the Gentiles. And going out from thence, he went into the house of one called Justus, a worshipper of *the true God*,
 8 whose house was adjoining to the synagogue. And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house ; and many also of the Corinthians hearing *the gospel*, believed, and
 9 were baptized. Then the Lord said to Paul (*who at this time felt great discouragement**) by a vision in the night, Fear not, but
 10 speak and do not keep silence ; for I am with thee, and no man shall fall upon thee to injure thee ; for I have much people in this
 11 city, to whom thy ministry shall be successful. And with this encouragement he sat down there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them with great success.
- 12 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made an assault upon Paul with one consent, and brought him before the
 13 tribunal, saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul would have opened his mouth in
 14 his own defence, Gallio kindly prevented him, and said to the Jews, If it were an act of injustice, or mischievous licentiousness, O ye
 15 Jews, with which you charged this person, it were reasonable I should bear with you. But if it be a question concerning words, and
 16 names, and the law which is among you [*or affairs of religion*] see to it yourselves ; for I will be no judge of these matters, which
 17 are foreign to my office. And with this wise answer he drove them away from the tribunal.—And all the Greeks laid hold on Sosthenes the ruler of the synagogue, as the chief occasion of the prosecution, and beat him before the tribunal ; but Gallio did not concern himself at all in the affair.

REFLECTIONS.

Much of the divine wisdom and goodness is seen in providing for those who are employed in the work of the gospel, *suitable associates* and companions in their labours ; and particularly happy are they to whom God hath been pleased to give, as to the pious *Aquila*, such a companion in the nearest relation of life, as may help them forward in the way to heaven, and may assist them in the service of religion, while they continue on earth. Much were the fatigues of *Paul's* life softened by the converse of *such friends*, who no doubt rendered the common business of life more pleasant, as well as *the work of the Lord* more delightful.—We find them, while endeavouring to propagate the gospel, *maintaining themselves* (for reasons peculiar to that situation) *by the labour of their own hands*, and even *Paul the apostle wrought with them* ; not because he had not a right to demand support, for he strenuously maintains that right at large, in his address to these very *Corinthians*, (1 Cor. ix. 1—14.) but to shame his mean-spirited enemies, who accused him of acting on *mercenary views* ; and because he thought in his conscience, on some other accounts, that his fidelity to Christ would be so much the more apparent, and his labours by this means so much the more successful. And what faithful minister, who

* On account of his own imperfections, to which he refers, 1 Cor. ii. 3.

in his conscience apprehended that to be the case, would not *choose to act* as he did ?

In the mean time, he was engaged as usual *every sabbath-day*, in discoursing to *the Jews*, and in demonstrating to them the truth of the gospel ; and it is pleasant and edifying to observe, with what earnestness he applied himself to do it : But *their inveterate prejudices* prevailed over all the cogency of his demonstration, and all the warmth of his address ; so that he was forced at length to give them up as incorrigible. Yet let us observe *how* he gave them up ; with what grief, mixed with *just indignation* at their folly and ingratitude ; *shaking his garment*, and saying, *Your blood be upon your own heads ! I am clean.*—Thus are impenitent unbelievers their own murderers ; they bring upon themselves even *the blood of their own souls*. Grievous it is that it should *rest upon them* ; but absolutely necessary that *we*, who are *the messengers of God* to them, should take heed, that if they must after all bleed by the sword of divine justice, *we ourselves* may at last be found *pure* ; for terrible beyond expression would it be, if by our treachery or neglect *their blood should be required at our hand*.

The apostle's success among the *Gentiles* raised new opposition, and *his infirmities* frequently occasioned returning fears : But how graciously did our Lord interpose for his encouragement and support, assuring him of his *protection*, and promising him *yet more abundant success* ! Blessed Jesus, *thy grace was sufficient* even for this thy servant, amidst all the labours of the ministerial and apostolical office, amidst all the *internal* as well as *external* difficulties he had to encounter in the discharge of it ! May *that grace* be imparted to us ; and may it appear that *thou hast much people*, wherever thou fixest the bounds of our habitation, and the sphere of our ministry !

The tumultuous *rage of the Jews* is nothing surprising, for we have been accustomed often to read of it, but the *prudence* and *moderation of Gallio* is truly amiable : That wise Roman well knew the extent of his office as a *magistrate*, and was aware that it gave him no title, no pretence to dictate in *matters of conscience*, or to restrain men's *religious liberties*, so long as they abstained from *injustice* or *mischievous licentiousness*, by which the public peace might be disturbed, and the rights of society invaded. May God give to all the magistrates of the earth such a spirit ! and the gospel, under the influences of divine grace, will soon become an universal religion, and shew the world how little need it has of being supported by *civil penalties* ; to which those are generally most ready to have recourse, who, like these Jews, are confounded by fair argument.

SECTION XLII.

Paul departs from Corinth ; goes through Ephesus, to Jerusalem ; and afterwards visits the churches in Galatia and Phrygia. Apollos preaches at Ephesus, and being further instructed, goes to Achaia. Ch. xviii. 18, &c.

18 **A**ND the tumult at Corinth being appeased, Paul still continued there for a considerable time, and then taking leave of the brethren, sailed thence for Syria, and took with him Priscilla and

Aquila ; having shaved his head at *the port of Cenchrea*, for he had made a vow* to do it on account of some extraordinary deliverance. And he arrived at Ephesus, and there he left them ; but on the sabbath which he spent there, he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. And though they entreated him to have staid longer with them, he did not consent ; but took his leave of them for the present, saying, It is necessary for me by all means to celebrate the approaching feast of the pass-over at Jerusalem ; but I will turn my course to you again, God willing, and make a longer stay. And so he set sail from Ephesus.—And landing at Cesarea, he went up to the feast at Jerusalem ; and having saluted the church there, he went down to Antioch. And having spent some time there he departed, going through the country of Galatia and Phrygia in a regular manner, confirming all the disciples in their adherence to the gospel.

Now a certain Jew, whose name was Apollos, a native of Alexandria, an eloquent man, and powerful in the Jewish scriptures, came to Ephesus. This person was already in some measure instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught the things of the Lord with great accuracy, [considering his] being only acquainted with the baptism of John.

And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. And Aquila and Priscilla hearing him, being pleased with the good spirit he discovered, [but observing his deficiencies] took him to their house, and explained to him the way of God in a more perfect manner. And shortly after, when he intended to go over to Achaia, the brethren of Ephesus wrote to the disciples there, exhorting them to receive him. And being arrived there, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace ; for he strenuously debated with the Jews in public, shewing by the scriptures, that Jesus is the Messiah.

REFLECTIONS.

How happy was the church in these unwearied labours of Paul ! And how happy was Paul in those repeated opportunities, and in that health and spirit which God gave him, to undertake and to go through with such labours ! Happy in preaching Christ to so many, to whom he was before unknown. Happy in beholding the blessed fruits of his labour, and visiting the churches he had formerly planted in one province and another, and which in this intermediate space were grown up to some maturity. Prudent likewise, in such a concern to water those plants by renewed instruction. So let gospel ministers cherish the divine life in those souls where they have been instrumental to produce it ; ever remembering, that it is a matter of so great importance as well deserves our repeated care and our renewed labours. Well was it also for the churches, that such a promising and hopeful fellow-labourer as Apollos was raised up to him, and to them. To be

* The author has a long note on the different opinions of commentators concerning this vow, but leaves the matter uncertain.

servent and courageous in spirit; to be eloquent and mighty in the scriptures, are happy talents for such as are to be devoted to the ministry. May all that enter on this work among us, come forth with a zeal and courage like his; and I must add, may they also come forth with an *humility* like that which, in *Apollos*, adorned all those bright talents with which he was endowed! What he knew, he zealously taught; what he did not know, he was willing and ready thankfully to learn; and that not only from the mouth of an apostle but of a fellow-christian in inferior life; from *Aquila*, yea and from *Priscilla* too. Since God had given that wise and pious woman to know the way of the Lord, by longer experience and to greater perfection than he, *Apollos*, amidst all his popularity and applause, was willing to become her disciple; and to learn from her in private discourses, those evangelical lessons which decency did not permit her to give, or him to receive, in public assemblies.

It was prudent in *Apollos* to take, as well as just in the brethren to grant, proper letters of recommendation, when he was going to the churches in *Asiatic*, where he was a stranger; and well did he answer this recommendation, and make himself known amongst them by valuable services. Mighty as he was in the scriptures of the Old Testament, he might well demonstrate from them to the Jews at *Corinth*, that *Jesus* was the Messiah; and happy would it have been for the church and the synagogue there, had they known no distinguishing name but his. Nevertheless, one said, *I am of Paul*; and another, *I am of Apollos*. We may reasonably hope, that this zealous evangelist expressed the same displeasure which the holy apostle himself did on such an occasion; and laboured with all his might to impress them with the thought that neither he that planted nor he that watered was any thing, but God who gave the increase to both. May it be impressed deeper on the hearts both of ministers and people, that all the glory may be rendered to him from whom all our gifts, and graces, and successes proceed.

SECTION XLIII.

Paul coming to Ephesus, instructs some of John's disciples there; performs miracles, and preaches with great success. Ch. xix. 1—20.

- 1 **N**OW it came to pass, that while *Apollos* was at *Corinth*, *Paul* having passed through the upper parts of the lesser *Asia*, came to *Ephesus*; and finding there some disciples, he said unto
- 2 them, Have ye as yet, on your believing, received the Holy Spirit? And they replied to him, Nay, we have not so much as heard
- 3 whether there be any Holy Spirit given now or not. And he said
- 4 to them, Into what then were you baptized? And they said, Into *John's* baptism (*they being in Judea about the time of his ministry*.) And *Paul* said, *John* indeed administered the baptism of repentance; telling the people that they should believe in him that was to
- 5 come after him, that is, in *Jesus Christ*. And hearing this, they
- 6 were readily baptized into the name of the Lord *Jesus*. And *Paul*

laying *his* hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them; and they spake with *divers* other tongues, and prophesied. And they were in all about twelve men.—And he went into the synagogue, and discoursed with boldness, disputing for the space of three months, and evincing the things which related to the kingdom of God. But as some of the Jews were hardened and would not believe, speaking reproachfully of the way of salvation which the apostle taught, before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples he had made, disputing daily in the school-room of one Tyrannus. And this was done for the space of two years: so that all the inhabitants of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, who came to Ephesus, heard the word of the Lord Jesus. And God wrought extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul; so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried from his body to those that were sick, and the diseases removed from them, and the evil spirits came out of them.—And some of the vagabond Jews, who were exorcists pretending to a power of expelling demons, undertook to name the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth, to come out. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did this. But the evil spirit answering them with contempt, said, Jeus I know, and Paul I know, whose power I cannot resist; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was, sprung upon them, and getting master of them all, prevailed against them, in so great a degree, that they fled out of the house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews, and Greeks also, dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many of them who believed, who had professed unwarrantable arts, came of their own accord, and confessed their guilt, and made a declaration of these their sinful deeds. And a considerable number of those, who had practised curious and magical arts, bringing their books together, burnt them before all who were present: and they computed the value of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver*: so powerfully did the word of the Lord grow and prevail.

REFLECTIONS.

Thus may the word of God still grow and prevail wherever it comes, and separate between the sinner and his sins, be they ever so customary, ever so reputable, ever so gainful: And thus may the flame of love and zeal consume every snare which hath detained the soul in a base captivity to it. In order to the production of so noble an effect, may those who are so indifferent to his sacred operations, as if they had never yet heard that there was an Holy Spirit, be filled with it, and be made obedient to it: And may they to whom the mysteries of

* If these were Jewish shekels of 2s. 6d. each, the sum was 6256l. But most probably they were the Attic Drachmas, commonly used among the Greeks; which, according to Dr. Prideaux, amounted (at 9d. each) to 1875l. sterling.

the gospel are committed, *declare them boldly*, whoever may be hardened, whoever may oppose, and how evil soever some who boast of their knowledge of God may *speak of this way*.—We cannot expect that the *miracles* of *Paul's* days should be renewed in ours, but we may humbly hope that the noblest effects of his preaching will be renewed: that dead souls will be quickened, the languishing revived, and *evil spirits* cast out from *men's minds*; where their possession is more fatal and dangerous than in *their bodies*. And God grant that none may ever undertake to *invoke the name of Jesus* upon such occasions, or to appear under the character of *his servants*, who have not cordially believed in him themselves, and received their commission from him! We need not wonder if in such a case, like these *sons of Sceva*, they meddle to *their own wounding*, and prove the means of *irritating* rather than *curing* those disorders which the influence of *Satan* has introduced, and which *the Spirit of Christ* alone can effectually remove.

SECTION XLIV.

Paul driven from Ephesus, by a tumult which Demetrius raises, and the chancellor prudently appeases. Ch. xix. 21, &c.

- 21 **N**OW when these things were fulfilled, Paul purposed in spirit, that passing through Macedonia and Achaia, *where he had planted many flourishing churches*, he would go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, it is necessary for me also to see
 22 Rome. And sending two of those that ministered to him, *namely Timothy and Erastus*, into Macedonia, *to prepare his way*, he him-
 23 self staid some time longer in *that part of Asia*. And there happened about that time no small tumult concerning that way of
 24 worship and salvation which Paul taught. For a man, whose name
 25 was Demetrius, a working silversmith, *by making silver shrines of the goddess Diana**, procured no small gain to the artificers;
 26 whom he gathered together, with the workmen employed about the business, and said, Men, you know that our maintenance arises
 27 from this manufacture; and you see and hear, that this Paul hath persuaded great numbers of people, not only of Ephesus, but
 28 almost of all Asia, and hath turned them aside *from the established religion*, saying, that they are not deities, which are made with
 29 hands; so that there is danger not only that this occupation of ours should be depreciated, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her grandeur destroyed; whom
 all Asia and the world worshippeth. And hearing *this*, they were filled with rage; and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the
 29 Ephesians. And the whole city was filled with confusion; and they rushed with one accord into the theatre dragging thither Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, *who were Paul's fellow-travel-*

* Little models of her celebrated temple at Ephesus. Beza supposes them to have been coins or medals, with the image of *Diana* (of which he has given a cut) and the temple on the reverse.

30 lers.—And when Paul *hearing of this*, would have gone in to
 31 *address* the people, the disciples would not permit him. And
 some *likewise who were* the principal officers of Asia, as they had
 a friendship for him, sent to him, and desired that he would not
 32 venture himself into the theatre. Some therefore were crying
 one thing, and some another ; for the assembly was confused,
 and the greater part did not know for what they were come to-
 33 gether. And they thrust forward *one Alexander* from amongst
 the multitude, *that he might speak to the people*, the Jews also
 urging him on, *fearing lest they should suffer among the followers*
of Paul. And Alexander beckoning with his hand, would have
 34 made a defence to the people. But when they knew that he was
 a Jew, *and an enemy to their worship*, they would not suffer him to
 speak ; but one voice arose from them all, crying out for about the
 35 space of two hours, Great is Diana of the Ephesians !—But the
 chancellor (*or recorder of the city*) having pacified the people,
 said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that doth not know,
 that the city of the Ephesians is devoted to the great goddess
 36 Diana, and to the *image* that fell down from Jupiter ? Since then
 these things are incontestable, it is necessary for you to be quiet,
 37 and to do nothing in a precipitate manner : for you have brought
 these men *hither*, who are neither robbers of temples, nor blas-
 38 phemers of your goddess. If therefore Demetrius and the arti-
 ficers that are with him, have a charge of *any private injury*
 against any one, *the civil courts* are held, *in which they may have*
justice done them ; and there are the proconsuls *who are the proper*
 39 *judges* ; let them implead one another. But if you are inquiring
 any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a
 40 lawful assembly, *which this is not*. And indeed we are in danger
 of being called in question for the insurrection which hath hap-
 pened this day, as there is no cause by which we can account for
 41 *this tumultuous* concourse. And when he had said these things
 he dismissed the assembly.

REFLECTIONS.

May God grant that the zeal of the *heathens*, in the worship of
 their imaginary deities, may not *rise up in judgment* against us, for
 the neglect of the living Jehovah ! They rent the skies with acclama-
 tions of the greatness of their goddess, and spared no cost to adorn
 her temple, or to purchase the models of it. May a sense of the
 greatness of *our God*, *who dwelleth not in temples made with hands*, fill
 our minds continually, and make us ready to *spend and be spent* in his
 service ! In too many instances indeed religion has degenerated into
craft, and been made a pretence of promoting men's secular interest.
 Would to God that all artifices of this kind were to be found amongst
Heathens ! But the spirit of these votaries to *Diana* has too often
 invaded the *Christian church*, and perhaps raised not a few *tumults*
 against them who have been its best friends.—We see how mad
 and furious is the rage of an incensed populace : Let us bless God
 that we are not exposed to it, and be thankful to that kind providence

which preserved the precious life of the apostle, when *after the manner of men he fought with beasts at Ephesus.*

The prudence of this chancellor is worthy of esteem, who found out a way to *quiet this uproar* : Happy had it been for him, if the good sense he shewed upon this occasion had led him to see the vanity of that idle tradition, which taught them that *an image fell down from their imaginary Jupiter*, or that *those could be gods who were made with hands.* But the god of this world hath in all ages blinded the minds of multitudes, and they have acted like ideots in religion, when in other instances their sagacity hath commanded a deserved and universal admiration. The prevalence of idolatry through so many polished and learned, as well as savage and ignorant nations, both ancient and modern, is a sad demonstration of this. Let us pray, that they may *consider and shew themselves men,* and deliver their own souls under a sensibility that they have *a lie in their right hand.* For this the labours of Paul were employed ; and the progress of that gospel he preached appears matter of great joy, when the effects of it are considered in this view.. May it, *like the morning light,* spread from one end of the heavens to the other ; while the admired *vanities of the Heathen* are degraded, and cast (as the sacred oracles assure us they shall be) *to the moles and the bats.*

SECTION XLV.

Paul goes to Achaia ; and returning through Macedonia, comes to Troas ; where he raised to life Eutychus, killed by a fall. Ch. xx. 1-16.

- 1 **N**OW after the tumult at *Ephesus* was ceased, Paul calling the disciples to him, and embracing them, departed to go
- 2 into Macedonia. And going through those parts, and having exhorted them *that had believed* with much discourse, he came into
- 3 Greece. And when he had continued *there* three months, as *he understood* that an ambush was laid for him, by the Jews, when he was about to embark for Syria, he thought it advisable to return
- 4 by Macedonia. And Sopater the Berean accompanied him as far as *what is called the proper Asia* ; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus ; and *likewise* Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, *who was now come to him from Ephesus* : and of the Asiatics (*natives of proconsular Asia*) Tychicus and Trophimus. These two
- 5 last going before, staid for us at Troas. And we set sail from Philippi, after the days of unleavened bread, and came to them at
- 6 Troas in five days, where we continued seven days.—And on the first day of the week, when the disciples met together to break bread *in remembrance of the death of Christ*, Paul being about to depart on the morrow, preached to them, and continued his dis-
- 7 course until midnight. And there were many lamps in the upper room in which they were assembled [*which greatly increased the*
- 8 *heat**]. And a certain young man, whose name was Eutychus,

* This seems to be the reason why the lamps were mentioned, in connection with the window being open. Ex.

sitting in an open window, fell into a profound sleep ; and as Paul continued his discourse a long time, he was so overpowered with sleep, that he fell down from the third story, and was taken up
 10 dead. And Paul went down and fell upon him, and taking him in his arms, said, Do not make any disturbance, for his life is in
 11 him (*God having by him restored it*). And going up again, and having broken bread, and eaten, he conversed a considerable time
 12 longer, even till break of day, and so departed. And they brought the youth alive *into the room*, and were not a little com-
 13 forted.—*Paul was now ready to depart* : but *we who were to accompany him* went before into the ship, and sailed to Assos, where we were to take up Paul ; for so he had appointed, choosing him-
 14 self to go on foot. And as soon as he joined us at Assos, we took
 15 him up, and came to Mitylene. And sailing from thence, we came the next day over-against Chios ; and the day following we touched at the island of Samos ; and having staid a while at Tro-
 16 gyllium, we came the day after to Miletus. For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, that he might not spend any time in Asia ; for he earnestly endeavoured, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

REFLECTIONS.

With what pleasure would *Paul*, and the Christians of *Macedonia and Achaia*, enjoy these happy interviews with each other ! A blessed earnest no doubt it was, of that superior pleasure with which they shall meet in the day of the Lord, when (as he had testified to some of them) they shall appear as *his joy and his crown*. We may assure ourselves, that his converse with his friends at *Troas* was peculiarly delightful ; and may reasonably hope, that though one of the auditory was overcome by the infirmity of nature ; and cast into a *deep sleep* during so long a discourse as Paul made, yet that many others were all wakeful, and gave a joyful attention. Nor can the apostle be censured for imprudence, in protracting the divine exercise, in such an extraordinary circumstance, beyond the limits which would commonly be convenient.—*Eutychus* was unhappily overtaken, and he had like to have paid dear for it : His death would, no doubt, have been peculiarly grievous to his pious friends, not only as sudden and accidental, but as the sad effect of having *slept under the word of God*, under the *preaching of an apostle*. Yet, even in that view of it, how much more inexcusable had he been, had it been in the broad light of the day, in a congregation where the service would hardly have filled up two hours ? where yet we sometimes see Christian worshippers (if they may be called worshippers) *slumbering and sleeping* ; a sight, I believe never to be seen in a *Mahometan mosque*, and seldom in a *Pagan temple*. Had those near *Eutychus*, that had observed his slumber, out of a foolish complaisance forbore to awake him, they would have brought perhaps greater guilt upon their own souls than he upon his ; and when his eyes and ears had been sealed in death, might perhaps have reflected upon themselves with a painful severity, as having been accessory to his ruin. But the mercy of

the Lord joined with and added efficacy to the compassion of *Paul*, his servant; in consequence of which the life of this youth *was restored*, and he was delivered well to his friends: Whereas, many that have allowed themselves to trifle under sermons, and *set themselves to sleep*, or who, as it were, have been *dreaming awake*, have perished for ever with the neglected sound of the gospel in their ears, have slept the sleep of eternal death, and are fallen to rise no more.

We see Paul solicitous to be present *at Jerusalem at Pentecost*, declining a visit to his *Ephesian friends*, amongst whom he had lately made so long an abode; thereby, no doubt, denying himself a most pleasing entertainment, out of regard to the views of superior usefulness: Thus must we learn to act; and if we would be of any importance in life, and pass our final account honourably and comfortably, must *project* schemes of usefulness, and resolutely adhere to them, though it obliges us to abstract or restrain ourselves from the converse of many in whose company we might find some of the most agreeable entertainments we are to expect on our way to heaven. Happy shall we be, if, at length meeting them at the end of our journey, we enjoy an everlasting pleasure in that converse, which fidelity to our common master has now obliged us to interrupt.

SECTION XLVI.

Paul's discourse to the elders of the Ephesian church, on taking leave of them at Miletus. Ch. xx. 17, &c.

17 **B**UT though Paul was in haste to go to Jerusalem, he sent *r* to
 18 Ephesus from Miletus, and called thither the elders of the
 19 church. And when they were come to him, he said to them,
 20 You know how I have been conversant among you all the time;
 21 from the first day in which I entered into Asia; serving the Lord
 22 with all humility, and with many tears and trials, which befell me
 23 by the ambushes of the Jews: and how I have suppressed nothing
 24 that was advantageous, not *neglecting* to preach to you, and to
 25 teach you publicly, and from house to house; testifying and *urg-*
 26 *ing* both to the Jews and Greeks, repentance towards God, and
 27 faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I am going
 28 bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall
 29 befall me in it; excepting that the Holy Spirit testifieth in every
 30 city, saying, that bonds and afflictions await me. But I make no
 31 account of any of these things, nor do I esteem my life precious
 32 to myself, so that I may *but* joyfully finish my course, and the
 33 ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, *even* to testify
 34 the gospel of the free grace of God. And now, behold, I know
 35 that ye all, among whom I have conversed, preaching the king-
 36 dom of God, shall not see my face any more. Wherefore I tes-
 37 tify to you this day, that *if any tierish* I am clear from the blood of
 38 all men. For I have not declined to declare to you all the counsel
 39 of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves, and to the whole
 40 flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath constituted you bishops, to

feed the church of God, which he hath redeemed with his own
 29 blood. For I know this, that after my departure grievous wolves
 30 will enter in among you, having no mercy on the flock. Yea,
 from among your own selves men shall arise, speaking perverse
 31 things, to draw away disciples after them. Watch therefore with
 all diligence, remembering that for the space of three years I
 ceased not to warn every one by night and by day with tears.—
 32 And now, brethren, I recommend you to God, and to the word of
 his grace, *even to him that is able to edify you, and to give you an*
 33 *inheritance among all that are sanctified. I have coveted no man's*
 34 *silver, or gold, or raiment. Yea, you yourselves know that these*
hands have ministered to my necessities, and to those that were
 35 *with me. I have shewed you all things, by my example, as well as*
by my doctrine, how that thus labouring you ought to assist the in-
 firm, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he him-
 36 self said, "It is much happier to give, than to receive." And
 having said these things, he kneeled down and prayed with them
 37 all. And there was great lamentation among all *present*: and fall-
 38 ing upon Paul's neck, they embraced him *with many tears*; espe-
 cially grieving for that word which he spake, that they should see
 his face no more. And they conducted him to the ship.

REFLECTIONS.

Though these elders of *Ephesus* were to see the face of the apostle
 no more, which was indeed just matter of lamentation, yet we would
 hope this excellent discourse of his continued in their minds, and was
 as a nail fastened in a sure place. May all Christians, and especially
 all ministers, that read it, retain a lively remembrance of it. May
 we learn of this great apostle, to serve the Lord with humility and af-
 fection. May those who are called to preside in assemblies, and to
 take the charge of souls, withhold from their people *nothing that is*
profitable for them; and, not contenting themselves with public in-
 structions, may they also teach from house to house, shewing the same
 temper in private converse, which they express while ministering in
 the assemblies; and testifying, as matter of universal and perpetual
 importance, repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus
 Christ: And, O that the divine blessing may attend these remon-
 strances, that many may every where repent and believe!—May all
 ministers learn the exalted sentiments and language of this truly
 Christian hero; and each of them be able to say, under the greatest
 difficulties and discouragements, in the view of bonds and afflictions,
 and even of martyrdom itself, *None of these things move me, neither*
count I my life dear unto me, so that I may finish my course with joy,
and may fulfil the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to
testify the gospel of the grace of God.—Such resolutions may they
 form when they enter on their office, and may they act upon them in
 discharging every part of it: taking heed to themselves, and to the
 respective flocks over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers.
 Accordingly may they take the oversight thereof, not by constraint but
 willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; coveting no man's

silver, or gold, or raiment; nor affecting to enrich or aggrandize themselves or their families, but always ready to relieve the necessitous according to their ability, remembering this precious word of the Lord Jesus, so happily preserved, especially in this connection, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Thus while they are not shunning to declare in the course of their public ministry the whole counsel of God, may they also be examples to the flock of a uniform, steady, and resolute piety! And to quicken them to it, may they often reflect, that the church of God committed to their trust was redeemed by his own blood! May it be impressed deeply on all our hearts, that we are intrusted with the care of those precious souls for whom our divine Redeemer bled and died! May we therefore see to it, that we are watchful to preserve them from every danger; that we warn them day and night with tears; and, in a word, that we order our whole behaviour so, that when we must take our final leave of them, we may be able to testify, as in the sight of God, that we are clear from the blood of all men.

Such ministers may God raise up to his church in every future age; such may his grace make all that are already employed in the work! and for this purpose let every one who wishes well to the common cause of Christ and of souls, join in recommending us to God, and to the word of his grace, whence we are to draw our instructions and our supports. This will be a means, under the divine blessing, to keep us from falling, in the midst of all dangers and temptations; till at length he give us an inheritance with all the saints among whom we have laboured, that *they who sow, and [they who] reap, may rejoice together, Amen.*

SECTION XLVII.

The apostle resolutely pursues his journey to Jerusalem, though repeatedly warned of his danger there. Ch. xxi. 1—16.

- 1 **A**ND as soon as we had withdrawn from them *that accompanied us to the ship*, and had set sail from *Miletus*, we came with a direct course to *the island of Coos*, and the next day to *that of Rhodes*, and from thence to *the port of Patara*. And finding a ship passing over to *Phœnicia*, we went on board, and set sail.
- 2 And coming within sight of *Cyprus*, and leaving it on the left hand, we sailed to *Syria*, and landed at *Tyre*; for there the ship was to
- 3 unload its freight. And we continued there seven days; finding a number of disciples, who told Paul by the spirit, if he regarded his safety, not to go up to *Jerusalem*, as it would expose him to
- 4 great danger. But when we had finished these seven days, we departed from our friends and went our way: and they all attended us out of the city, with their wives and children; and kneeling
- 5 down on the sea shore, we prayed. And having embraced each other, we went on board the ship; and they returned back to their
- 6 own houses. And finishing our course, we came from *Tyre* to *Ptolemais*; and embracing the brethren there, we continued with

8 them only one day. And on the morrow, Paul and his company departed, and came *by land* to Cæsarea ; and entering *there* into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was *one* of the seven
 9 deacons, we lodged with him. Now he had four virgin daughters,
 10 who were prophetesses, *having received the miraculous gifts*. And as we continued *there* many days, a certain prophet, whose name
 11 was Agabus, came down from Judea to Cæsarea ; and coming to us, he took up Paul's girdle, and binding his own hands and feet
 12 *with it* he said, Thus saith the Holy Spirit, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man whose girdle this is, and shall deliver him
 13 into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we and the inhabitants of that place entreated him, that he
 14 would not go up to Jerusalem. But Paul answered, What mean ye *by weeping* thus, and breaking my heart ? for I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of
 15 the Lord Jesus. And when we saw that he would not be persuaded, we ceased to *press him any further*, saying, Let the will
 16 of the Lord be done. And after these days *spent at Cæsarea*, making up our baggage, we went up to Jerusalem. And *some* of the disciples also from Cæsarea went along with us, and brought us to the house of one Mnason a Cyprian, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge,

REFLECTIONS.

Let us observe and emulate that excellent and heroic temper which appeared in the blessed apostle St. Paul, in this journey to Jerusalem : When still the Holy Spirit testified in every city, that bonds and afflictions awaited him ; when his friends in so fond a manner hung around him, and endeavoured to divert him from his purpose ; he was not insensible to their tender regards : Far from that, his heart melted, and was even ready to break, under the impression : yet still he continued inflexible. There was a sacred passion warmer in his soul than the love of friends, or liberty, or life : *The love of Christ constrained him*, and made him willing, joyfully willing, not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem, for his name, who had indeed died for him there. O that such as this might be the temper, such as these the sentiments, of every minister, of every Christian ! For surely imprisonment in such a case is better than liberty ; and death infinitely preferable to the most prosperous life secured by deserting his service, or flying from any post which the great Captain of our salvation hath assigned us.

On the other hand, let us learn of these wise and pious friends of Paul, to acquiesce in the will of God, when the determination of it is apparent, how contrary soever it may be to our natural desires, or even to those views which we had formed for the advancement of his cause and interest in the world ; where perfect resignation may be difficult, in proportion to the degree of our piety and zeal. Can any teach him knowledge, or pursue the purposes of his glory by wiser and surer methods than those which he has chosen ? In this instance the bonds of Paul, which these good men dreaded as so fatal an obstruction to the

gospel, tended, as he himself saw and witnessed while he was yet under them, *to the furtherance of it*; and what they apprehended would prevent them seeing him any more, occasioned his returning to *Cæsarea*, and continuing there for a long time, when, though he was *a prisoner*, they had free liberty of conversing with him.—And even to this day we see the efficacy of his sufferings, in the spirit they have added to those epistles which he wrote while *a prisoner of Jesus Christ*, and in that weight which such a circumstance also adds to his testimony. Let Jesus therefore lead us, and all his other servants, whithersoever he pleases, and we will bless his most mysterious conduct, in sure expectation of that day, when what is now most astonishing in it shall appear beautiful, and ordered for the best.

It is pleasant to observe the honour paid to *Mnason*, as *an old disciple*: An honourable title indeed it is; and wherever it is found, *may days speak, and the multitude of years teach wisdom!* And may there be a readiness, as in this good old man, to employ all the remaining vigour of nature, be it more or less, in the service of Christ, and in the offices of cordial love and generous friendship to those who are engaged in the work of the Lord.

SECTION XLVIII.

Paul is assaulted by the Jews while worshipping in the temple, and rescued by Lysias the Roman officer. Ch. xxi. 17—36

17 **A**ND when we were arrived at Jerusalem, the brethren re-
 18 ceived us with pleasure. And the next day Paul entered in with us to the house of the apostle James; and all the
 19 elders of the church were present. And having embraced them, he gave them a particular account of those things which God had
 20 done among the Gentiles by his ministry since he left them. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said to him, Brother, thou seest how many myriads of believing Jews there are
 21 now gathered together from all parts to Jerusalem; and they are all zealous for the law. Now they have been informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews, which are among the Gentile nations, to apostatize from Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, nor to walk according to the customs of our fathers.
 22 What is it then [*which is to be done?*] The multitude must by all means come together, *when they will observe thy conduct*; for they
 23 will soon hear that thou art come. Therefore, *to remove any ill impressions*, do this that we say to thee: There are with us four men converts to the gospel, who have a vow of *Nazaritish** upon
 24 them: take them along with thee, and purify thyself with them, according to the Jewish ritual, and be at all the necessary charges

* *Witius* has shewn from *Maimonides*, that a person who was not a *Nazirite*, might bind himself by a vow to take part with one in his sacrifice. Dr. Lardner observes from *Josephus*, that to be at charges with *Nazarites* was a common and popular thing among the Jews. Cred. B. I. C. 9. § 7. What these charges were, see *Numb.* vi. 13—15.

with them, that they may shave their heads, and offer the usual sacrifices, and then all persons that come up to the temple will know that there is nothing of truth in those things which they have heard of thee ; but that thou thyself walkest regularly, keeping the
 25 law. And as for the believing Gentiles, we have written, as thou knowest, determining that they should observe none of these things, except it be to keep themselves from what is offered to idols, and from blood, and from that which is strangled, and from
 26 fornication. Then Paul, according to this proposal, took the men who had the vow, and the next day, being purified with them, entered into the temple, declaring to the priests his purpose for the accomplishment of the days of purification, till an offering should be offered for every one of them, as the law required.—
 27 But as the seven days were about to be accomplished, the Jews that were come from Asia to the feast of Pentecost, seeing him in the temple, threw all the populace into confusion, and laid hands upon
 28 him, crying out, Ye men of Israel, help ! this is the man, that every where teacheth all men contrary to the Jewish people, and the law of Moses, and to this place ; and hath even brought
 29 Greeks into the temple, and thus polluted this holy place. (For they had before seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, whom they imagined that Paul had brought into that part of
 30 the temple, which was appropriated to the Jews). And the whole city was moved, and there was a tumultuous concourse of the people ; and laying hold of Paul, they dragged him out of the
 31 temple ; and immediately the gates were shut. And when they went about to kill him, word was brought to Lysias, the chief officer of the Roman garrison, who was the Tribune of the cohort, that all
 32 Jerusalem was in confusion : Who immediately took soldiers, and some of the centurions with him, and ran in among them. And when they saw the Tribune and the soldiers, they ceased from
 33 beating Paul. Then the Tribune drew near, and took him into his custody, and commanded him to be bound with two chains ; and in-
 34 quired who he was, and what he had done. And some among the multitude cried out one thing, and some another. And as he could not know the certainty of any thing by reason of the tu-
 35 mult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. But when he was upon the stairs, it came to pass that he was forcibly borne
 36 along by the soldiers, because of the violence of the crowd. For the multitude of the people followed and pressed upon them, crying out, Away with him ! Kill him !

REFLECTIONS.

It is delightful to observe, how the same principles of humble and benevolent piety wrought in the mind of Paul on the one hand, and on the other in those of James and the brethren of the circumcision ; while the one recounted, and the other rejoiced in what God had done by his ministry among the Gentiles. May ministers always remember, that whatever good is done by their ministry, it is the work of God, and that the praise is to be rendered to him : And, O that whenever they

assemble and meet with each other for religious and friendly conference, they may have cause for mutual thankfulness, while they hear and tell what efficacy God is putting into the word, as spoken by them ; which is never likely to be greater than when the ministers of it appear least in their own eyes.

A prudent precaution, consistent with the strictest integrity, discovered itself in the advice which James and the Jewish Christians gave to their beloved brother Paul on this occasion, *to conform to the customs of the Mosaic worship*, in an affair in which he very innocently might do it ; thereby to shew, that as he was not a slave to ceremonial institutions, so neither was he a bigoted zealot against them ; nor one that made it a point of humour to oppose them in matters of *indifference*, and to father that opposition on *conscience*. When will the leaders of our churches agree to teach their followers by such wise and mild examples, to study the honour, and comfort, and usefulness, of each other, *pursuing the things that make for peace*, and tend to promote mutual edification ?—Yet what prudence, or what integrity, may not sometimes be *mistaken* or misrepresented ? What good may not be *evil spoken of*, and abused as a cloak for mischief, when men's hearts are overflowing with malice, and are so wretchedly corrupted as to take pleasure in indulging it under the disguise of religion ? What numerous falsehoods attended the charge which those furious Jews brought against Paul, in every article of it ? Yet it is believed, on the credit of a noisy rabble ; and it was owing to the gracious interposition of a very remarkable providence, that *this light of Israel* was not immediately quenched ; and that this holy apostle was not torn in pieces by an outrageous mob, fierce and irrational as so many wild beasts, before he could have any liberty to speak for himself.—Let not religion be condemned *unheard*, and then surely it cannot be condemned at all : Let us with pleasure reflect, that God can raise up guardians to it from the most unexpected quarter, and animate men, like *this Roman officer*, from considerations merely secular, to appear most seasonably and effectually in the defence of his faithful servants. Let us adore the wise conduct of *providence* in instances like these ; and let us always pursue our duty with courage, since God can never be at a loss for expedients to secure us in our adherence to it.

SECTION XLIX.

Paul makes a speech to the people, giving them an account of the means by which he was engaged to embrace and preach the gospel. Ch. xxi. 37, &c. xxi. 1—16.

37 **B**UT as Paul was going to be brought into the castle, he said to the Tribune, May I be allowed to speak to thee ? And *hearing him use the Greek language*, he said, *in some surprise*, What
38 canst thou speak Greek ? Art not thou that Egyptian, who didst
before these days stir up a sedition, and lead out into the wilder-
39 ness four thousand murderers ? But Paul said, *No* : I am indeed a

Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no inconsiderable city ; and
 40 I entreat thee, permit me to speak to the people.—And on his giving him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs *which led up to the castle*, beckoned with his hand to the people ; and when there was a great silence, he addressed them in the Hebrew dialect*,
 xii.saying, Men, brethren, and fathers, hear my apology, *which I*
 2 *make now to you.* And when they heard that he addressed them in the Hebrew dialect, they the rather kept silence. And he
 3 said, I am indeed a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cilicia, but educated in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, *and accurately instructed in the law of our fathers ; being zealous for God and his institutions,*
as you all are at this day : nor was any one more violent in opposing
 4 *the religion of Jesus than I,* who persecuted this way to the death ; binding both men and women, and delivering them into prisons ;
 5 as also the high priest is my witness, and all the court of the elders ; from whom also having received letters to the brethren, I went to Damascus to bring those that were there, bound to Jerusalem, that they might be punished. And it came to pass that as I was on my journey, and was come nigh to Damascus, about
 7 noon, on a sudden a great light shone about me from heaven ; and I fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to me, Saul, Saul,
 8 why dost thou persecute me ? But I answered, Who art thou, Lord ? And he said unto me, I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom
 9 thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw the light indeed, and were terrified ; but they did not *distinctly* hear the voice
 10 of him that spake to me. And I said, Lord, what shall I do ? And the Lord said unto me, Arise and go to Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things, which are appointed for thee to
 11 do. And as I could not see by reason of the glory of that light *which struck me*, being led by the hand of those that were with me,
 12 I came to Damascus. And one Ananias, a pious man according to the law, who had an honourable character among the Jews that
 13 dwelt at Damascus, coming to me and standing by me, said to me, Brother Saul, look up. And in that very hour *and moment* I
 14 looked up upon him, *and saw distinctly.* And he then addressed himself further to me and said, The God of our fathers hath fore-ordained thee to know his will, and to see that righteous person, *whom our nation crucified*, and to hear a voice from his *own* mouth ;
 15 because thou shalt be his witness to all men of those things which
 16 thou hast seen and heard. And now why dost thou delay ? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, invoking the name of the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

By whatever methods God hath been pleased to bring us home to himself, and to introduce into our minds the saving light of his gospel, we shall have long, and indeed everlasting reason, to recollect it

* The *Syriac* language was then commonly spoken by the Jews, and therefore called *Hebrew*.

with pleasure ; especially when he hath gone in any remarkable manner out of his common way for this gracious purpose. They who have in this respect *obtained mercy of the Lord*, should undoubtedly make it their care often to recollect the particular circumstances, and should be ready on every proper occasion *to recount* these wonders of power and love, for the encouragement and instruction of others. The learned education which Paul had received *at the feet of Gamaliel*, was once, no doubt, the matter of his boasting and confidence. Unsanctified learning *made his bonds strong*, and furnished him with many a specious argument to oppose the gospel : Yet when divine grace changed his heart, and turned these accomplishments into another channel, they made the conquest so much the more glorious, and rendered him the fitter instrument to subserve God's wise and merciful purposes, for the defence and propagation of Christianity by his means. Wherever *learning* is possessed, may it be so directed and improved ; and wherever it is perverted and abused, may Christ manifest his victorious power, to *cast down imaginations, and every high thing which exalteth itself* in rebellion against him, till every thought be brought into a willing and thankful *subjection* to his authority.

Adored be the condescension of that blessed Redeemer, which spared this prostrate enemy, and reduced him by the tender expostulations of *mercy* rather than the terrors of *wrath* ; exerting that secret, transforming power upon his heart, without which this miracle, astonishing as it was, would have had no thorough and abiding effect. Speak, O Lord, from heaven to them that ignorantly persecute thee ; and make them humbly willing to *receive the law from thy mouth*.—If they who saw this tremendous scene, and the astonishing consequences of it, were not themselves subdued to the gospel (as it doth not appear that they were) it must certainly be a sad illustration of the hardness of the human heart, almost beyond parallel ; especially when we consider how eager *Paul* would undoubtedly be, to make those who had been the associates of his crime the partners of his faith, service, and hope, as a Christian. But however these efforts might miscarry with respect to *them*, there were those *who glorified God in him*. Let us take this renewed opportunity of doing it ; and as he is still by his writings a glorious witness to Christ among us, *on whom the ends of the world are come*, let us, by receiving his testimony with a most cheerful assent, *set to our seal that God is true*.

SECTION L.

Paul, proceeding in his defence to the Jews, is interrupted by their violence ; but is exempted from being scourged on pleading his privilege as a Roman citizen. Ch. xxii. 17—29.

17 **T**HE apostle in his speech from the stairs of the castle went on
to say, And it came to pass, that when I was returned to
18 Jerusalem, and was praying in the temple, I was in a trance ; and
I saw him *who had spoken to me from heaven*, saying to me, Make
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- haste and depart quickly from Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they know *that* I was imprisoning and scourging in the synagogues them that believed in thee; and when the blood of Stephen thy martyr was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting to his slaughter, and kept the garments of those that slew him; *I hope therefore that my testimony will be heard with some regard.* And he said to me, Go thy way, for I will send thee far off to the Gentiles.
- And they heard him *with quietness till he came to this word*; and then *they were so enraged, at the mention of the Gentiles, that they all lifted up their voice, saying, Away with this fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live.*—And as they were crying out, and were rending their garments, and casting dust into the air, the Tribune, *perceiving that Paul had exasperated the people*, commanded that he should be brought into the castle, and ordered that he should be put to the question (*or examined*) by scourging, that he might know for what cause they raised such an outcry against him. And as they were binding him with thongs, Paul said to the Centurion who stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman citizen, and uncondemned?
- And the Centurion hearing *this*, went and told the Tribune, saying, Consider what you are about to do, for this man is a Roman.
- And the Tribune came, and said to him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? And he said, Yes. And the Tribune answered, I obtained this freedom with a considerable sum of money. And Paul replied, But I was free-born. They therefore, who were about to have put him to the question, immediately departed from him; and the Tribune was afraid, when he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him, *which was a breach of privilege for which he might have been punished.*

REFLECTIONS.

We learn from this scripture, as well as from many other passages, that our Lord Jesus Christ, though invisible, is present while the proclamation of his gospel is made, and is ever attentive to the temper with which it is received. Justly therefore doth he resent the injury that is done him, when these messages of life and peace are neglected: Justly doth he often, in the course of his providence, remove those ordinances which men have ungratefully slighted, and call away the faithful ministers who have *stretched out their hands all the day long to a disobedient and gainsaying people.*—It is not an easy thing for a servant of Christ, who is deeply impressed with divine truths himself, to imagine to what a degree men are capable of hardening their hearts against them. They are ready sometimes to think with *Paul*, Surely it must be impossible for any to resist such arguments, and such addresses. But experience makes them wiser, and shews, that though they *smite the rock* again and again, it is in vain, till divine grace melt it into streams of water.

Blessed be God, that when his gospel is removed from one place it is sent to another; nor shall it ever be totally rooted out of the world, *while seed-time and harvest, summer and winter*, continue their revolutions. Adored be that grace which sent *Paul* and the other apostles to *speak unto the Gentiles, that they might be saved!* The life of our souls was in that commission, and all our eternal hopes take their rise from it. But what *cruel malignity* did these Jews express, whom all the wonders of this astonishing story could not convince, nor all the eloquence of it persuade! On the contrary, for no crime but that of being made the ambassador of divine mercy, and the instrument of deliverance to thousands of perishing sinners, *they raise a cry* against the messenger of God, as if he were the most impious of blasphemers, and would have hurried him from the face of the earth as *unfit to live upon it*: How much less were *they* fit to continue here! But thus *forbidding* the apostles to *speak to the Gentiles* (as he himself observes) *they filled up the measure of their iniquities*; so that after the abused mercy of God had waited a little longer, his deserved wrath came upon them to the uttermost.

Most unrighteous was it in the Roman officer, on this popular clamour, to attempt putting this best of men to the torture: Most reasonable was *Paul's plea*, as a *Roman citizen*, to decline that suffering. It is a prudence worthy of being imitated by the bravest of men, not to throw themselves into unnecessary difficulties. Nor are we under any obligation as Christians to give up *our civil privileges*, which we are to esteem as the gifts of God, to every insolent and turbulent invader. In a thousand circumstances, gratitude to God, and duty to men, will oblige us to *insist upon them*; and a generous concern for those that are to come after us, should engage us to labour and strive that we may transmit them improved, rather than impaired, to posterity as yet unborn.

SECTION LI.

Paul brought before the Sanhedrim: upon a dissension in the council, his sentence is delayed; but a conspiracy is formed against his life. Ch. xxii. 30. xxiii. 1—22.

30 **T**HE Roman officer having rescued *Paul* from the mob, lodged him in the castle that night; and on the morrow, desiring to know certainly of what he was accused by the Jews, he loosed him from his bonds, and commanded the chief priests, and all their Sanhedrim to come together; and bringing *Paul* down, he set him before them.

xxiii. And *Paul* looking attentively on the Sanhedrim, said, Men and brethren, I have even to this day conversed before God in all good conscience*. And *Ananias* the high-priest commanded those that stood by him, to smite him on the mouth. Then *Paul* said to him,

* He must be supposed to refer only to the time since he became a Christian.

God is about to smite thee, O thou whited wall !* For sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and yet in violation of the law com-
 4 mandest me to be smitten. But they that stood by said, Dost thou
 5 revile the high priest of God ? And Paul said, Brethren, I was
 not aware† that it was the high-priest ; *otherwise I should have been*
more guarded, for I know it is written, “Thou shalt not speak evil
 6 of the ruler of thy people.” Then *r* Paul, perceiving that the one
 part of the court were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, cried
 out in the Sanhedrim, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son
 of a Pharisee ; for the hope of a future state, and the resurrection
 7 of the dead, I am brought into judgment. And on his speaking
 this, there was a contention between the Pharisees and the Sad-
 8 ducees ; and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say,
 there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor *separate* spirit ; but
 9 the Pharisees confess both. And *upon this* there was a great
 clamour ; and the Scribes *who were* on the side of the Pharisees, arose
 and contended, saying, We find no evil in this man ; but if a spirit,
 10 or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. And
 as a great disturbance arose, the Tribune *being informed of it*, fear-
 ing lest Paul should be torn in pieces by them, commanded the
 soldiers to go down, and take him by force from the midst of them,
 11 and bring him *again* into the castle.—And in the following night
 the Lord *Jesus appeared to Paul in a vision*, and standing by him,
 said, Be of good courage, Paul ; for as thou hast testified the
 things concerning me at Jerusalem, so thou must also bear tes-
 12 timony at Rome. And when it was day, some of the Jews, en-
 tering into a conspiracy, bound themselves with a curse, saying,
 that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.
 13 And they were more than forty *persons* who had made this
 14 agreement. And they came to the chief priests and elders, and
 said, We have bound ourselves by a solemn anathema, not to
 15 taste any thing till we have slain Paul : now therefore do you
 with *the rest of* the Sanhedrim, signify to the Tribune, that he
 bring him down to you to-morrow, as if you would more accurate-
 ly discuss what relates to him ; and we are ready to kill him be-
 16 fore he can come near you. But Paul’s sister’s son, *providentially*
 hearing of the ambush, came, and entering into the castle, told
 17 Paul. And Paul calling one of the Centurions to him, said, Con-
 duct this young man to the Tribune, for he hath something to
 18 tell him. He therefore took and led him to the Tribune, and
 said, Paul the prisoner calling me to him, desired that I would
 bring unto thee this young man, who hath something to tell thee.
 19 And the Tribune taking him by the hand, and leading him into a
 retired place, inquired of *him*, What is it that thou hast to tell me ?
 20 And he said, The Jews have agreed together to ask thee, that thou
 wouldest bring down Paul to-morrow to the Sanhedrim, as if they

* *Josephus’s* account of this man’s character and fate, well corresponds with this of the apostle.

† “I did not consider.” W.—*as I should have done.*

- 21 would inquire something more accurately concerning him. But do not be prevailed upon by them ; for there are more than forty of them *who lie in an ambush for him, who have obliged themselves by a curse neither to eat nor drink till they have killed him ;*
- 22 and they are now ready, waiting *only* an order from thee. The Tribune therefore dismissed the young man with a charge, *saying, Be sure thou tell no man that thou hast discovered, these things to me.*

REFLECTIONS.

Next to the history of *the great Captain of our salvation*, as recorded by the holy evangelists, none of the Christian heroes of whom we read, makes a brighter figure than *Paul* ; nor is there any who seems *a spectacle* more worthy the view of *angels*, or of God himself. Nobly supported in the midst of persecutions and indignities, by *the testimony of his conscience* as to the integrity with which he had *walked before God*, and therefore assured of the divine aid, he appears superior to all human injuries. Most unrighteously did *the high-priest* command that *mouth to be smitten* which had spoken *the words of truth and soberness* : Most justly did God verify the prediction of his faithful, though despised servant, and *smite that whited wall* with speedy destruction which had stood in such a haughty opposition to his gospel. *Paul* might have urged a great deal in defence of what he had said, and yet he chose prudently to decline that defence ; and seems much more solicitous to prevent *the abuse* of what might appear dubious, than to assert his own cause to the utmost that it would bear. Thus should we sometimes be ready, as the *Psalmist* beautifully expresses it, *to restore what we took not away*, and for the peace of society, and the edification of others, should be content to wave apologies which we might justly offer. Let us learn particularly to revere that authority with which God hath clothed *magistrates* ; and be very cautious how we *speak evil of the rulers of our people* : Let the ministers of the gospel especially be cautious of it, lest the *ministry* be upon that account *blamed*, and their own character exposed, as if they were trumpeters of *sedition*, rather than ambassadors of the *Prince of peace*.

Our Lord had given it in charge to his apostles that they should *be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves* : both these characters are joined in *Paul's* behaviour on this important occasion. It was no dishonest artifice to *divide the counsel*, and to engage the favour of *the Pharisees*, by reminding them of what, if they considered the circumstances of the case, must needs appear to them to be the truth ; that it was *his zeal* for the doctrine of *the resurrection* that brought upon him a great deal of that opposition which he was then encountering, and that the most convincing evidence of that doctrine depended on the facts which, as an apostle of Jesus, he publicly maintained. And it had been most happy for the Pharisees had they always borne in their own minds the caution they now gave the Sadducees, to *take heed of fighting against God*. May none of us

provoke the Lord to jealousy, as if we were stronger than he ; which we shall certainly do by rejecting the tidings he hath sent us by his apostles, and the life and immortality which he promises in his gospel.

Graciously did providence provide for the rescue and deliverance of Paul from *the tumult* then excited, and *the conspiracy* afterwards formed. Who would not lament to see a *design of murder* avowed with impunity before the *chief magistrates* of the Jewish nation, and approved by them under a pretence of *religious zeal*, while it was consecrated to God by the solemnity of a *vow* ? *The time* was indeed come, when they that killed the servants of Christ thought they did God good service, as if no libation or offering could have been so pleasing unto him as the blood of his saints : But names alter not the nature of things ; God regarded their counsels with righteous abhorrence, and laughed them to scorn. In vain did they form and approve a conspiracy which heaven had determined to defeat. *Their lying in wait* was, we know not how, discovered to a youth, and by means of that youth, who might perhaps have seemed beneath their notice, God as effectually preserved Paul, as if he had sent an angel from heaven to deliver him, and turned the cabals of these bigots that thirsted for his blood into perplexity and shame. So, Lord, do thou continue to carry the counsel of the froward along, and save from the hand of violence and fraud all who commit themselves unto thee in well-doing, and humbly confide in thy wisdom and goodness,

SECTION LII.

Paul, for his safety, is sent by night to Cæsarea, where he is presented to Felix, and accused by Tertullus. Ch. xxiii. 23, &c. xxiv. 1—9.

- 23 **N**OW this worthy Tribune was determined to consult the safety of his prisoner ; and finding it necessary to remove him from Jerusalem, he called to him two of the Centurions, and said, Prepare two hundred soldiers to go to Cæsarea ; and seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen, by the third hour of the night
- 24 (*nine o'clock in the evening*) and provide beasts to set Paul upon, and conduct him in safety to Felix the governor of the province.
- 25 And he wrote an epistle to Felix, the contents of which are in this copy.
- 26 “ Claudius Lysias to his excellency Felix the governor, sendeth
- 27 greeting : This man was seized by the Jews, and had like to have been slain by them, when I came with a party of soldiers, and
- 28 rescued him : and I have learnt since that he is a Roman. And desiring to know the crime of which they accused him, I brought
- 29 him before the Sanhedrim : and I found he was accused concerning questions of their law, but that nothing was charged upon him
- 30 worthy of death, or of bonds. But when it was signified to me that an ambush would be laid for the man by the Jews, I imme-

diately sent *him* to thee, commanding his accusers also to declare before thee what they have against him. Farewell."

31 The soldiers therefore, as it was commanded them, taking up
32 Paul, brought him by night to Antipatris*. And the next day
they returned to the castle, leaving the horsemen to go with him;
33 who entering into Cæsarea, and delivering the epistle to the
34 governor, presented Paul also before him. And when the governor
had read *the letter*, he asked of what province he was; and
35 being informed that he was of Cilicia, I will hear thee, said he,
when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to
be kept in Herod's Prætorium†.

xxiv. And after five days *only*, the high-priest Ananias came down
to Cæsarea, with the elders, and a certain orator called Tertullus:
and they made their appearance *in form*, before the governor
2 against Paul. And he being called, Tertullus, *whose business it*
was to open the cause, began to accuse him, saying, *in a flattering*
† oration to Felix, "As we enjoy great peace by your means, and
illustrious deeds are happily done to this *whole Jewish nation* by
3 your prudent administration, we accept *it* always, and in all places,
4 most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Nevertheless that I may
not trouble you further, I beseech you to hear us in a few words,
5 with your usual candour: for we have found this man a pestilent
fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout
6 the world, and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes; who
hath attempted also to profane the temple, and whom we appre-
7 hended and would have judged according to our law; but Lysias
the Tribune coming upon us with great force, took *him* away out
8 of our hands, commanding his accusers to come to you; by which
means you might yourself, on examination, take cognizance of
9 all these things of which we accuse him."—And the Jews also
gave their assent *to all that he had urged*, saying that these things
were so.

REFLECTIONS.

To hear the most amiable goodness injured by false and virulent accusations, is what we have been accustomed to, in the perusal of this sacred history, in which we have now advanced so far. The surprise of it therefore is abated. But who would not lament, to see the great talent of *eloquence*, in itself so noble, and capable of such excellent use for the public good, abused to such infamous purposes; on the one hand to varnish over crimes, and on the other to render innocence suspected, and virtue itself odious! Had that of *Tertullus* been much greater, than it appears by this specimen, it would only have served to perpetuate his own shame to posterity for the mean *flattery* he addressed to *Felix*, and the cruel and unjust *invectives*

* Above thirty-eight miles from Jerusalem: Cæsarea was seventy.

† A palace and court built by Herod the Great, having probably a state-prison belonging to it.

‡ Almost every word of this oration is false.

which he poured out against *Paul*. But history is juster than panegyric or satyr, and has left us the character of the one, and the other, painted in its true colours. And much more evidently shall every character appear in the justest light before the tribunal of a righteous God, where *Paul*, and *Felix*, and *Tertullus*, and *Ananias*, are to meet again. There may we, with the apostle, *have honour and praise*, whatever eloquence may now arraign, whatever authority may now condemn us!—In the mean time, where *we enjoy great peace* under the magistrates which providence has set over us, and *worthy deeds are done by them* for the honour of God and the good of mankind, let us *always thankfully accept it*, and take care ourselves to be *quiet in the land*. Should they who call themselves the followers of Jesus, be indeed *pestilent fellows and movers of sedition*, they would act not only beneath their character as Christians, but directly contrary to it, and in a manner which must by necessary consequence forfeit it; nor should they effect to be *ringleaders in sects and parties*. Their master is the *Prince of peace*: In his service let them exert themselves, but always *in the spirit of love*, labouring by the meekness of their tempers, and the usefulness of their lives, to silence, and if possible to shame, the clamours of their ignorant or malicious enemies.

SECTION LIII.

Paul vindicates himself from the accusation of Tertullus, so that Felix only orders him to be gently confined. Ch. xxiv. 10—23.

- 10 **T**HEN Paul, after the Governor had made a signal to him to speak, answered *the charges brought against him by Tertullus, in the manner following*: “Knowing that thou, *O Felix*, hast been for several years a judge to this nation, I answer for myself with
 11 the more cheerfulness; as thou mayest know, that it is no more
 12 than twelve days since I went up to worship at Jerusalem; and they neither found me disputing with any man in the temple, nor making any insurrection among the people, either in the syna-
 13 gogues or in the city; nor can they produce any proof of the
 14 things concerning which they now accuse me. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of our fathers; believing all things which are written in the
 15 law and in the prophets; having hope towards God *of that*, which they themselves also expect, that there shall be a resurrection of the
 16 dead, both of the just and of the unjust. And upon this account, I exercise myself to have always an inoffensive conscience *both*
 17 towards God and towards men. Now after several years, I came
 18 to Jerusalem to bring alms to my nation, and offerings; upon which some Asiatic Jews found me purified in the temple, neither
 19 with multitude nor with tumult: who ought *now* to have been present before thee, and to accuse *me face to face*, if they had

20 any thing against me. Or let these *persons* themselves *who are here present* say, if when I stood before the Sanhedrim, they
 21 found any crime in me; unless it be with relation to this one word, which I cried out when I stood among them, That for the *doctrine* of the resurrection of the dead I am judged by you this
 22 day.—And when Felix heard these things, he put them off, saying, After I have been more accurately informed concerning *this way of religion which Paul teaches*, when Lysias the Tribune cometh down, I will take cognizance of the affair between you.
 23 And he commanded the Centurion to keep Paul *in his custody*, and let him have *every proper* liberty; and to hinder none of his friends from assisting *him*, or coming to him.

REFLECTIONS.

We here behold *the righteous as bold as a lion*, under false accusations, most confidently advanced by persons of the highest rank, and the most sacred, though (by a strange contrast) at the same time the most detestable character. And the more Felix was *exercised in affairs*, the more easily might he discern the genuine traces of innocence and integrity in his whole *defence*, to which, plain as it was, he seems to have paid *more regard*, than to all the complimentary and insinuating harangue of *Tertullus*; so great is the native force of *truth*, even on minds not entirely free from some corrupt bias!—Justly did Paul dare to avow his *serving God* according to the purity of gospel institutions, by whomsoever it might be called *heresy*; nor need any fear that charge who make *scripture the standard of their faith*, and in the sincerity of their hearts seek inward divine teachings, that they may understand the sense of it; taking care not to run before their guide, and, with this injured servant of Christ, making it their *daily exercise to maintain*, in the whole of their conversation, a *conscience void of offence towards God and men*: A noble, though in some instances an arduous exercise; such an exercise, that he who maintains it may look forward with pleasure to the unseen world, and through the grace of God in a Redeemer, may *entertain a cheerful hope* of that *resurrection*; which, how terrible soever it may be to *the unjust*, shall be to all *the righteous* the consummation of their joys and of their glory. Whatever danger such may incur in consequence of a steady regard to *that hope*, let them courageously *commit themselves to him that judgeth righteously*, who knows how to raise them up protectors where they might least expect it, and to make, as in this instance, those that are strangers to religion and virtue themselves, the means of delivering them from unreasonable and wicked *persecutors*, and not only of guarding their lives from violence, but of securing to them many conveniences and comforts.

SECTION LIV.

Paul, though heard by Felix with great conviction, is yet left a prisoner, and being again accused before Festus appeals to Cæsar. Ch. xxiv. 24, &c. xxv. 1—12.

- 24 **A**ND after some days, Felix coming with Drusilla his wife,
 25 who was a Jewess, sent for Paul, and heard him *discourse at*
 25 *large* concerning faith in Christ. And as he reasoned concerning
 righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come, Felix
 trembling, answered, Go thy way for this time, and I will take
 26 some future opportunity to call for thee. And he hoped also that
 money would be given him by Paul, that he might set him at
 liberty; and therefore he sent the more frequently for him, and
 27 discoursed with him.—Now after two years were ended, Felix
 was succeeded in his government by Portius Festus; and Felix,
 willing to ingratiate himself with the Jews, left Paul a prisoner.
 xxv. When Festus therefore was come into the province of Judea;
 2 after three days he went up from Cæsarea to Jerusalem; and the
 high-priest, and the chief among the Jews, appeared before him
 3 with an accusation against Paul, and entreated him, begging it as
 the only favour * they desired against him, that he would send for
 him to Jerusalem; having formed a scheme of laying an ambush
 4 to kill him by the way. But Festus answered, that Paul should
 be kept at Cæsarea, and that he himself would shortly set out
 5 for that place: therefore, said he, let those of you who are able,
 go down with me; and if there be any thing criminal in this man,
 6 let them accuse him in my hearing. And having continued among
 them more than ten days, he went down to Cæsarea; and the
 next day sitting down on the tribunal, he commanded Paul to be
 7 brought before him. And when he appeared, the Jews who came
 down from Jerusalem, stood round about, bringing many heavy
 accusations against Paul, which they were not able to prove;
 8 while he answered for himself, and said, Neither against the laws
 of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Cæsar, have I
 9 committed any offence at all. But Festus, willing to ingratiate
 himself with the Jews, answered Paul and said, Wilt thou go
 up to Jerusalem, and there be judged before me concerning these
 10 things? But Paul said, I am standing at Cæsar's tribunal, where
 I ought to be judged: I have done no wrong to the Jews, as thou
 11 knowest perfectly well. For if indeed I have done wrong to any,
 or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die:
 but if there is nothing in those things of which these persons ac-
 cuse me, no man can justly give me up to gratify them. I appeal
 12 unto Cæsar.—Then Festus having privately spoken with the coun-
 cil, answered Paul, Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar
 thou shalt go.

* “Entreating him to favour them by sending for Paul.” W.

REFLECTIONS.

In the conduct of *Paul* towards *Felix*, we see the character of a gospel-minister illustrated in a most amiable manner. What could argue greater magnanimity, than to *deal thus plainly* with a man in whose power his liberty was? Yet he did not sooth and flatter him, but acted the part of one infinitely more concerned about the salvation of his hearers than his own temporal interest. He chooses faithfully to represent the evil of those vices to which *Felix* was especially addicted, and displays the terrors of the *judgment to come*, as enforcing the sacred laws of *righteousness* and *temperance*, which *Felix* had presumed so notoriously to violate.—Let the haughtiest sinners know, even upon their tribunals, and upon their thrones, that the *universal Judge*, and the *universal King*, will shew his superior power, and will ere long call them to his bar; and, if they are conscious of allowed disobedience and rebellion against that supreme Lord of all, let them, like *Felix*, tremble.

Great is the force of *truth*, and of *conscience*, in which the prisoner triumphs, while the *judge trembles*. And O how happily might this consternation have ended, had he pursued the views which were then opening on his mind! But, like thousands of awakened sinners in our day, he *deferred* the consideration of these important things to an uncertain *hereafter*. He talked of a *more convenient season* for reviewing them; a *season*, which alas, never came! for, though he *heard again* he *trembled no more*, that we can find; or if he did, it was a vain terror, while he went on in that *injustice* which had given him such dreadful apprehensions, of which *his leaving Paul bound* was a flagrant instance. Let every reader seriously weigh this remarkable, but terrible case, and take heed of *stifling present convictions*, lest they only serve to increase the weight of guilt, and to render the soul for ever more sensible of that greater condemnation to which it will be exposed by wickedly overbearing them. In the mean time, we do not find that *Druzilla*, though a *Jewess*, was thus alarmed*. She had been used to hear of a *future judgment*; perhaps too she trusted to her being a *daughter of Abraham*, or to the expiations of the *law*, which were never intended to answer such purposes; and so, notwithstanding the natural tenderness of her sex, was proof against those *terrors* which seized so strongly on her husband, though an *heathen*. Let it teach us to guard against those false dependencies which tend to elude convictions, that might otherwise be produced by the faithful preaching of the word of God. Let it teach us to stop our ears against those syren songs which would lull us into eternal ruin, even though they should come from the mouths of those who appear like *angels of light*; for the *prince of darkness* himself could preach no more pernicious doctrines, than those which reconcile the hopes of salvation with a corrupt heart and an immoral life.

* For this excellent remark I am indebted to Bishop *Atterbury* in his unequalled sermon on this subject.

In the conduct of *Festus*, as well as of *Felix*, we see what dangerous snares *power* and *grandeur* may prove, to a man who is not influenced by resolute and courageous virtue. The liberty of the worthiest of mankind was sacrificed by both, to their political views of *ingratiating themselves with the Jewish people*. Happy that ruler, who approving the equity of his administration to every man's conscience, has no need to court popular favour by mean compliances; and whom the greatest eagerness of men's unjust demands can never turn aside from that steady tenor of justice which a righteous God requires, and which will engage that protection and favour in which alone the most exalted creatures can be happy; in which alone they can be safe.

SECTION LV.

Paul is brought forth to be examined before Agrippa and Bernice, in a grand assembly. Ch. xxv. 13, &c.

- 13 **A**ND when some days were passed, king Agrippa and Bernice
 14 *his sister**, came to Cæsarea to pay their respects to Festus.
 14 And as they continued there many days, Festus laid before the
 king the case of Paul, saying, There is a certain man left in
 15 bonds by Felix: concerning whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the
 chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, desiring judg-
 16 ment against him. To whom I answered, that it is not the cus-
 tom of the Romans to give up any man to destruction, till he
 that is accused have the accusers face to face, and be allowed an
 opportunity of making his defence as to the crime laid to his
 17 charge. When therefore they were come hither to *prosecute him*,
 I without any delay sat down upon the tribunal *the next day*, and
 18 commanded the man to be brought forth. Against whom, when
 the accusers stood up, they brought no charge of such things as
 19 I supposed: but had certain questions against him relating to
 their own religion, and about one Jesus that was dead, whom
 20 Paul affirmed to be alive. But as I was dubious of the question
 relating to him, I said *to Paul* that, if he were willing, he should
 21 go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things. But Paul
 appealing to be kept to the hearing of *our August Emperor†*, I
 22 commanded him to be kept till I could send him to Cæsar. Then
 Agrippa said unto Festus, I also would desire to hear the man my-
 self. And he said, To-morrow thou shalt hear him.
 23 The next day therefore, Agrippa and Bernice coming with
 great pomp, and entering into the place of audience, with the

* With whom he was suspected of living in an incestuous commerce. Both *Juvenal* and *Josephus* mention this.

† Since *Augustus* was not properly one of the names of NERO (as it was of Titus) I thought the import of *Señar* here, which was plainly a complimentary form of speaking, might be most justly expressed by *this version*.

Tribunes and principal men of the city; at the command of
 24 Festus, Paul was brought forth. And Festus said, O king Agrippa, and all ye who are present with us, ye see this man, concerning whom all the multitude of the Jews have pleaded with me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he ought
 25 not to live any longer. But *after diligent inquiry*, I could not apprehend him to have done any thing worthy of death; yet as he himself appealed to our August Emperor, I have determined to
 26 send him *to Rome*: concerning whom *however* I have nothing certain to write to his majesty: wherefore I have brought him out before you *all*, and especially before thee, O king Agrippa, that after *further* examination taken, I may have something to write;
 27 for it seems to me absurd to send a prisoner *to be tried before Cæsar*, and not to signify also the crimes *alleged* against him.

REFLECTIONS.

Mysterious as that dispensation was which permitted Paul's labours to be interrupted by so long an imprisonment, it is nevertheless very pleasant to trace the manner in which all was graciously over-ruled by a wise and kind providence. On this occasion he had an opportunity of *bearing his testimony*, first *before rulers and kings* in Judea, and then in *Rome*, and in *the palace of Cæsar*.—None of the jewels which these princes might wear, none of the revenues which they might possess, were of any value at all, when compared with the advantage which their converse with *Paul* gave them, for learning *the way of salvation*: But how shamefully was the advantage neglected, even *the price* which was *put into their hands to get this divine wisdom*. Alas! how coldly do they speak of the most important matters, even those relating to the death and resurrection of him, by whose knowledge and grace alone hell was to be avoided and heaven secured! There was *a question about one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive*: A doubtful question! But, O *Festus*, why was it doubtful to thee? Surely, because thou didst not think it worth thy while seriously to search into the evidence that attended it; else that evidence had opened upon thee till it had grown into full conviction, and this thine illustrious prisoner had led thee *into the glorious liberty of God's Children*; had led thee to a throne far brighter than that of *Cæsar*, far more stable than the foundations of the earth.

It is no wonder that *Agrippa* had a curiosity to hear *Paul*; it is no wonder that the gospel story in general should move curiosity; but God forbid that it should be considered merely as an amusement: In that view it is *an amusement* that will cost men dear. In the mean time, the prudence of *Festus* is to be commended, who was desirous to get *further information* in an affair of such a nature as this; and his equity, which bore a testimony to the *innocence of the apostle*, is worthy of applause; as well as *the law* which provided, that *none should be condemned unheard*: A law, which, as it is common to all nations, (courts of inquisition only excepted) ought to be the rule of our proceeding in all affairs, not only in public but private life; if

we would avoid acting an injurious part in the censures we pass on the characters of others, and exposing our own to the just reproach, which they seldom escape who take upon them to *judge a matter before they have heard it.*

SECTION LVI.

Paul's defence before Agrippa. Ch. xxvi.

- 1 **T**HEN Agrippa said unto Paul, It is permitted unto thee to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretching forth his hand, made his defence ; *which was as follows :*
- 2 “ I esteem myself happy, O king Agrippa, that I am this day called to make my defence before thee, concerning all those things
- 3 of which I am accused by the Jews ; especially as thou art acquainted with all the customs and the questions among the Jews : where-
- 4 fore I entreat thee that thou wilt hear me with patience.—The manner of my life from my youth, which from the beginning was spent among *those of my own nation at Jerusalem*, is known
- 5 to all the Jews : who were acquainted with me from the first (if they would testify) that I lived a Pharisee, according to the
- 6 strictest sect of our religion. And now I stand in judgment for the hope of that promise (*of a resurrection*) which was made by
- 7 God unto our fathers : to which *promise* our twelve tribes hope to attain, worshipping continually night and day : concerning which hope, O king Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews. And I ap-
- 8 peal to you my honoured auditors, Why should it be judged an
- 9 incredible thing by you, that God should raise the dead ? I myself indeed [*was once an enemy to the Christian doctrine, and*] thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the
- 10 name of Jesus the Nazarene : which accordingly I did in Jerusalem ; and I shut up many of the saints in prison, having received authority from the chief priests. And when *some of them* were
- 11 killed, I gave my vote against *them* : and frequently punishing them in all the synagogues, I compelled them to blaspheme ; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even to
- 12 foreign cities. With * this view, as I was going to Damascus,
- 13 with authority and commission from the chief priests, at mid-day, while I was in the way, O king Agrippa, I saw a light from heaven, exceeding the splendour of the sun, shining about me, and
- 14 those who travelled with me. And when we were all fallen down to the earth, I heard a voice speaking to me, and saying in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me ? *it is*
- 15 hard for thee to kick against the goads. And I said, Who art thou, Lord ? And he said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.
- 16 But arise, and stand upon thy feet, for to this purpose I have appeared unto thee, to ordain thee a minister and a witness, both

* In this view, D. WITH this view, A.

of the things which thou hast seen, and of those in which I will
 17 appear unto thee : delivering thee from the *Jewish* people, and
 18 from the Gentiles, to whom I now send thee ; to open their eyes,
 that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power
 of Satan unto God ; that they may receive forgiveness of sins,
 and an inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith,
 19 which is in me. From that time, O king Agrippa, I was not
 20 disobedient to the heavenly vision : but declared first to them at
 Damascus, and *afterwards to those at Jerusalem*, and through all
 the country of Judea, and then to the Gentiles *wherever I came*,
 that they should repent, and turn to God, performing deeds
 21 worthy of repentance.—On account of these things, the Jews
 seizing me in the temple, attempted to have killed me with their
 22 own hands*. Having therefore obtained help from God, I con-
 tinue until this day, testifying both to small and great ; saying
 nothing but what the prophets and Moses have declared should
 23 be ; that the Messiah having suffered, and being the first who
 rose from the dead, should discover light to the people, and to
 the Gentiles.

24 And as he was thus making his defence, Festus said with a loud
 voice, Paul, thou art distracted : much study driveth thee to mad-
 25 ness. But he replied, I am not mad, most noble Festus ; but utter
 26 the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these
 things, to whom also I speak with freedom ; for I am persuaded
 none of these things are hidden from him, since this is not an
 27 affair transacted in a corner. O king Agrippa, believest thou the
 28 prophets ? I know that thou believest.—Then Agrippa said unto
 29 Paul, Thou almost persuadest me to be a Christian. Paul said,
 I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me
 this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except
 30 these bonds. And as he said this, the king arose, *not able to hear*
any more, and the governor, and Bernice, and those who sat with
 31 them. And when they had retired, they spake one with another,
 saying, This man hath done nothing worthy of death, or of bonds.
 32 And Agrippa said to Festus, This man might have been set at li-
 berty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar ; *but now he has put it*
out of our power to discharge him.

REFLECTIONS.

Perfectly does our blessed Redeemer, in this instance, appear to
 have answered his promise, that when his disciples were brought be-
 fore governors and kings for his sake, it should be given them in that
 hour what they should speak : For indeed it is impossible to imagine
 what could have been said more suitable, or what more graceful, than
 this discourse of Paul before Agrippa ; in which the seriousness and
 spirituality of the Christian, the boldness of the apostle, and the po-

* This, as Beza observes, is the exact import of the word, and is here
 used with great propriety.

liteness of the *gentleman* and the *scholar*, appear in a most beautiful contrast, or rather a most happy *union*.

There was no appearance of flattery, in congratulating himself upon an opportunity of speaking before one skilled in the manners and in the records of the Jews; for the more they had been attended to, with the greater advantage would the cause of Christianity have appeared. There was no arrogance in his insisting upon *the strictness of his former life*; since *those things* which were once *gain to him*, he had long since counted *loss for Christ*. The excellency of the end that inspired him was proportionable to the manner in which he was impressed with it. Well may they *serve God instantly day and night*, who have *the hope of a happy resurrection* before them; nor is the hope presumptuous and vain, since it is founded on a *divine promise*. *Why should it seem incredible* with any, that he who gave life should restore it; that God should raise the dead?

It was this expectation that supported the Christians, while *Saul breathed out threatenings and slaughter against them*; while mad with a profane and impious rage against *Jesus of Nazareth*, he compelled them to blaspheme, and persecuted them even to strange cities. But a conduct like this must occasion to him the keenest remorse, when he came to know what he did, and to see how gracious and condescending a Lord he had been persecuting in his members. When he took so gracious a method to reclaim him, it is no wonder that it left an indelible impression on his memory and on his heart. Indeed the story is so pleasant, and so instructive, that we may well bear to read it a second and a third time; or rather may rejoice in it, as so many instructive circumstances are added to those which we before endeavoured to illustrate and improve.

What can be more affecting than the view which our Lord here gives us of the state in which the gospel found men, in comparison with that into which it was intended to bring them? A gospel-ministry was to *open their eyes* before blinded, to *turn them from darkness to light*, and from the power of Satan to God; that they might receive the remission of their sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified. Enlighten, O Lord, the dark corners of the earth; vindicate the wretched slaves of Satan into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and adopt them to that inheritance which thou hast prepared for thy sanctified ones.—Wonderful scheme of divine goodness! and happy the men who are employed in promoting it! Let the profane world call their zeal *madness*, and account for it in a less decent and candid manner than *Festus* himself did; these would be found *the words of truth and sobriety*, and the God of truth and of wisdom will approve them as such, when *the wisdom of the world* shall all appear *foolishness* and madness.

God grant that none of us may rest in being *almost persuaded to be Christians*; when convictions begin to open, let us follow the celestial ray whithersoever it leads us, and *not be disobedient to the heavenly vision*. *Would to God*, that all who shall read or hear this discourse, might be *not only almost, but altogether* prevailed upon to be

Christians, and might attain to a *temper* like that of the blessed *Paul*, even though *his bonds* were not to be *excepted* ! For that religious joy which such a disposition must introduce, would render chains, yet heavier than his, light ; and they would quickly be transformed into ornaments of glory which shall deck the soul in the presence of God, with a lustre infinitely superior to that which the diadem of *Agrippa*, or the robe of *Festus*, could.

SECTION LVII.

Paul sets out on his voyage to Rome, and having suffered greatly in a storm, is assured of his preservation by a vision. Ch. xxvii. 1—26.

- 1 **P**AUL's appeal to *Cesar* could not be recalled ; and therefore, as it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul, and some other prisoners, to a centurion of the Augustan cohort, whose name was Julius. And going on board a ship of Adramyttis, we weighed anchor, intending to sail by the coasts of the lesser Asia ; Aristarchus a Macedonian, a Christian
- 2 of Thessalonica, being with us. And the next day we reached Sidon : and Julius treating Paul with great humanity, permitted him to go to his friends in that place, and to enjoy the benefit of
- 3 their care, to furnish him for his voyage. And weighing anchor from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were
- 4 contrary. And sailing through the sea that lies over-against Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to the port of Myra, a city of Lycia.
- 5 And there the centurion finding a ship of Alexandria bound for Italy, put us on board it. And when we had sailed slowly for several
- 6 days, and were hardly got over-against the point of Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to make greater dispatch, we sailed under
- 7 Crete, over-against the promontory of Salmone : and passing it with difficulty, we came to a certain place called The Fair Havens, in the neighbourhood of which was the city of Lasea.
- 8 And as much time was spent, and sailing was now hazardous, because the fast of expiation* was already over, and the winter was
- 9 coming on, Paul exhorted them, saying unto them, Sirs, I perceive this voyage will be attended with injury and great damage, not
- 10 only to the lading and the ship, but also to our lives. But the centurion paid greater regard to the pilot, and the master of the
- 11 vessel, than to those things which were spoken by Paul. And as the haven was not commodious to winter in, the greater part of the company advised to set sail from thence, if they might possibly reach to Phenice, to winter there ; which is a haven of Crete,
- 12 looking to the south-west, and north-west. And as the south wind

* This fast was the day of atonement, which was kept on the 25th of our September : at which time sailing in the Mediterranean is unsafe on account of the Michaelmas flows.

blew gently, supposing they were secure of *their* purpose, they
 14 weighed anchor, and sailed on close to *the shore of Crete*. But
 not long after, *the ship was in great danger, as* there arose against
 15 it a tempestuous wind, which is called Euroclydon*. And as the
 ship was violently hurried away, and was not able to bear up
 16 against the wind, we gave *her* up, and were driven. And run-
 ning under a certain island called Claudia, we were hardly able to
 17 get masters of the boat: which when they had hoisted up, they
 used *all the helps they could*, under-girding the ship *to keep her*
from bulging; and fearing lest they should fall upon the quicksands,
 18 they struck sail, and so were driven *before the wind*. And as we
 were exceedingly tossed by the storm, the next day they lightened
 19 the ship, *by throwing over-board the heaviest wares*; and the third
 day we cast out with our own hands the *very* tackling of the ship.
 20 Now as neither sun nor stars appeared for several days, and no
 small tempest *still* pressed upon us, all remainder of hope that
 21 we might be delivered, was taken away. And when there was great
 want of food, *all on board were quite dispirited*, then Paul standing
 in the midst of them, said, Sirs, you ought to have hearkened to
 me, and not to have loosed from Crete, and *so* to have gained †
 22 this injury and loss. Nevertheless, even now I exhort you to be of
 good courage; for there shall be no loss of any life among you;
 23 but only of the ship. For there appeared to me this night an
 24 angel of the God whose I am, and whom I worship, saying, Fear
 not, Paul; thou must be presented before Cæsar; and behold,
 God hath given thee *the lives of* all of them that sail with thee.
 25 Wherefore take courage, Sirs, for I trust in God that it shall be
 so, according to the manner in which it hath been spoken to me.
 26 But we must be cast upon a certain island.

REFLECTIONS.

We see in this renewed instance the great force of a virtuous character, and of a truly worthy and honourable behaviour, towards engaging the esteem of all around us. *Julius the centurion* had a reverence and affection for *Paul*, which, as in the beginning of this voyage it procured for him the satisfaction of *conversing with his friends at Sidon*, and receiving the fruit of their affection, so it was in the progress of it the occasion of *saving this great apostle's life*; and with it *that of the rest of the prisoners*. Let us learn thus to soften the fierce, and to convince the prejudiced, and humbly trust in that God who, *if our ways please him*, can turn our enemies into friends, and can preserve and bless us, by means of those who were intended to be only the instruments of affliction.

From the account which is here given us of the danger and distress which Paul and his companions suffered *upon the mighty waters*, let us

* Or, in modern phrase, a Levanter. See *Shaw's Trav.* p. 358—361.

† “Gained” is here an improper word. The passage is better rendered, “Ye should have followed my advice, and not have loosed from Crete to get “this,” &c. W.

learn to pity those who, being providentially engaged in a sea-faring life, are *often* in such *deaths* as these. When we hear, as it may be we do while far from the shores of our island, the stormy winds raging around us, and see the effects of that fury in those stupendous instances which sometimes appear, let us send up, as it were upon their rapid wings, our compassionate cries to that God who *holds them all in his fists*, that he would help and save those that are ready to be *swallowed up quick* in a watery grave, and perhaps many of them, while just on the brink of eternity, in the number of those that are of all others most unprepared for it.—Happy the man, in whatever extremities of danger, that is conscious of a relation to the God of heaven, as his God and his father; that can say, like *Paul*, in this blessed parenthesis, *whose I am, and whom I serve!* Let us, when we can use the language, take the comfort of it, and commit ourselves to the guardian care of our God with cheerfulness: *He knoweth them that are his*, and will take care of his own. Let our faith put a reality into all his promises, that *it shall certainly be, even as he hath spoken unto us*. Thus let us *encourage ourselves in the Lord our God*, and the event shall not shame our hopes; but we shall find by happy experience, that God will not only save us from ruin, but conduct us to joy as well as to safety everlasting. Amen.

SECTION LVIII.

Paul and his companions are at length shipwrecked, but all escape with their lives. Ch. xxvii. 27, &c.

THIS violent storm which we met with in our voyage had now
 27 continued thirteen days and nights. And when the fourteenth
 night was come, as we were tossed up and down in the Adriatic
 sea, the mariners suspected about midnight, that they drew near
 28 to some land: and sounding the depth they found it twenty fathoms; and having gone a little way from thence, and sounding
 29 again, they found it only fifteen fathoms. And fearing lest they
 should fall upon some rocky shore, they cast four anchors out of
 30 the stern, and wished that the day would break. But when the
 mariners endeavoured to flee out of the ship, and had let down the
 boat into the sea, under pretence that they were about to carry out
 31 anchors from the ship-head, Paul said to the centurion and the
 soldiers, Unless these men continue in the ship, ye cannot be
 32 saved*. Then the soldiers cut off the cords of the boat, and let
 33 it fall off before they had got into it.—And while the day was coming on, Paul exhorted them all to take some food, saying, To-day
 you are looking for the fourteenth day since the storm began, and

* The promise of saving their lives being upon condition that they took the most prudential methods the present circumstances would admit.

34 continue fasting, having taken *next to nothing*. Therefore I exhort you to take *some food*, since this is *proper* for your safety :
 35 for not a hair shall fall from the head of any of you. And when he had spoken thus, and had taken bread, he gave thanks to God
 36 before them all, and having broken *it*, he began to eat. And being
 37 all encouraged, they also took *some food*. And we *who* were in the ship *were* in all *no less than* two hundred and seventy-
 38 six souls. And being satisfied with food, they *once more* lightened
 39 the ship, and cast out the corn into the sea. And when it was day *they had the shore in sight*, but they did not know the land ; but they perceived a certain creek, having a shore *convenient for landing*, into which they were minded, if they were able, to have
 40 thrust the ship. And when they had weighed their anchors, they committed *the ship* to the sea, at the same time loosing the rudder bands, and hoisting up the main sail to the wind, they made
 41 for the shore. But falling on a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground ; and the fore part stuck fast, and remained immovable, while the hinder part was broken *to pieces* by the
 42 force of the waves. And the counsel of the soldiers was, that they should kill the prisoners, lest any one should swim away,
 43 and escape. But the centurion, being desirous to save Paul, hindered them from *their* purpose, and commanded those that could swim, to throw *themselves* out first into the sea, and get
 44 away to land : *which they did* ; and *as for the remainder*, some got upon planks, and others upon some of *the things* of the ship ; and so it came to pass, *according to Paul's prediction*, that they all got safe to land,

REFLECTIONS,

The section we have now been reading, contains a remarkable illustration of the obligations we are under to *use the most proper means* for security and success, even while we are committing ourselves to the care of divine providence, and waiting the accomplishment of God's *own promises* : For it would be most unreasonable to imagine, that he ever intended *any promise* to encourage rational creatures to act in a wild and irrational manner ; or to remain inactive, when he has given them natural capacities of doing something at least for their own benefit. It is in exerting these that we are to expect his powerful aid ; and all the grace, beauty, and wisdom of *the promise* would be lost, if we were to take it in any other view : To abuse it in a contrary view, is at best vain and dangerous presumption, if all pretence of relying upon it be not profane *hypocrisy*.

How solicitous are men in *danger* for the preservation of this mortal and perishing life ! they cast out their goods in a storm ; they throw away *the tackling of the ship* to lighten it ; and for many succeeding days forget even to *eat their bread* : O when shall we see a solicitude any thing like this about the concerns of their *never-dying souls* ? Alas, amidst the extremest danger, they are rather like those who, in such a storm as this, should have been *sleeping on the top of*

a mast. Let us not wonder, if, when awakened on a sudden, and made to see and to feel the extremity of their case, they are for a while taken off from attending as usual to their secular affairs ; nor rashly censure that as madness, which may be the first entrance of true wisdom into their minds.—We see how cheerful *Paul* was amidst the rage of winds and waves, under a sense of the faithful care of his God ; and how the assurance which he gave to the rest, that *their lives should be preserved*, though their possessions in the ship were all lost, animated them to eat *their bread with cheerfulness*. With how much greater cheerfulness may they sustain all *temporal* losses, and relish in the midst of them all the remaining bounties of providence (as some always remain) whose *eternal life* is secured by the word of God, and the engagement of a *covenant* which he has *confirmed by an oath* ?—To conclude :

It was to *Paul* that the *lives* of those that sailed with him were *given* : and his fellow-prisoners owed to him a double preservation, first from the *sword*, and then from the *sea*. Thus may a relation to God's faithful servants, and a community of interests with them, be the means of great temporal advantage even to those that are *strangers to the covenant of promise*. Surely after so many remarkable circumstances, pointing out the apostle to the company of this ship as a teacher commissioned by God, and favoured with extraordinary intercourses with him, they must be *very inexcusable* if they did not henceforward commence his attentive hearers and humble disciples. Those of them who did so, would find their deliverance from the fury of the *sea* but an earnest of *another* deliverance infinitely greater and better ; and are long ere this lodged with him on a far more *hospitable shore*, and in a more *peaceful harbour*, than *Malta*, or than earth could afford.

SECTION LIX.

Paul and his companions are hospitably entertained at Malta, where he exercises miraculous powers. Ch. xxviii. 1—16.

- THE apostle and the rest of the ship's company having escaped
 1 the danger of the shipwreck, and being got safe to land, they then knew the island on which they were cast was called Melita or
 2 Malta. And the barbarians (as the Romans proudly called them) treated us with uncommon humanity ; for having kindled a fire they brought us all to it, because of the present rain, and because
 3 of the cold. Now as Paul was gathering up a bundle of sticks, and laying them upon the fire, a viper coming out by reason of
 4 the heat, fastened upon his hand. And as soon as the barbarians saw the fierce animal, hanging on his hand, they said one to another, This man is certainly a murderer, whom *divine* vengeance hath not permitted to live, though he be saved from the sea.

- 5 But he shaking off the fierce animal into the fire, suffered no evil.
 6 However they expected that he should have swollen, or suddenly have fallen down dead : and having waited a considerable time, *to observe the effect*, and seeing no mischief befall him, changing
 7 their minds they said he was a God.—And in the neighbourhood of that place, there was the estate of the Chief, *or governor* of the island, whose name was Publius ; who having received us into his house, entertained us in a courteous manner for three days.
 8 And so it was, that the father of Publius, being seized with a fever and bloody-flux, was confined to his bed : to whom Paul going in, and having prayed, laid his hands on him and healed him.
 9 Now therefore when this *miracle* was wrought, the rest also who
 10 had disorders in the island, came and were healed : Who also honoured us with great honours, and when we departed they put
 11 on board such things as were necessary.—And after *we had been here* three months, we departed in a ship of Alexandria, that had wintered in the island, whose sign was *Gemini, or the twins*, Castor
 12 and Pollux. And being arrived at Syracuse, *in the island of Sicily*,
 13 we continued there three days. From thence we coasted round, and came over-against Rhegium, *in the south of Italy*. And after one day the south wind arising, we came in two days to Puteoli
 14 *near Naples* ; where we found *some Christian* brethren, and were entreated to stay with them seven days, *to which the centurion kindly consented* ; and so *having left the ship*, we went for Rome by
 15 *land*. And from thence the brethren *there*, having heard of our situation, came out to meet us, *some as far as Appii Forum (which was fifty-one miles from Rome)* and others to the Three Taverns *(which was about thirty)* whom when Paul saw, he thanked God,
 16 and took courage.—And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the *prefect, or captain* of the *prætorian* band : but Paul was permitted to dwell apart in an house of his own, with a soldier that guarded him.

REFLECTIONS.

Let us again pause, and, on this new occasion of doing it, adore the wise conduct of providence, though *its ways were in the sea, and its paths in the great waters*. Still did our dear Redeemer take care of his faithful servants and ministers, not only delivering them and their companions from destruction by *shipwreck*, but *providing* tenderly for them in their destitute condition, when their wet and probably torn garments seem to have been all they could call their own. The custom of Rome and Greece taught them to call all nations but their own *barbarous* ; but surely the generosity which these uncultivated inhabitants of *Malta* shewed, was far more valuable than all the varnish which the politest education could give, where it taught not humanity and compassion.—It is with pleasure that we trace amongst them the force of *conscience*, and the belief of *providence* ; which some more learned people have stupidly thought it *philosophy* to despise : But they erred in concluding that calamities must always be inter-

puted as judgments ; and let us guard against the same error, lest, like them, we unwarily censure, not only the innocent, but *the excellent of the earth.*

God wrought a most seasonable miracle for the preservation of Paul from the fury of the *viper* : and this frank and honest, though ignorant people, immediately retract their censure : But, as human nature is apt to do, they fall immediately from one extreme to another, and from pronouncing him a murderer, conclude him a *god*. They afterwards submitted to be better taught, and learnt to regard him as what he really was, a holy man favoured of heaven, and raised up to be an instrument of great good, both to the bodies and souls of his fellow-creatures. Let us also be willing candidly to correct and confess our mistakes, when means of better information offer ; and study to adjust our notions of men's characters *according to truth* ; that we may neither calumniate nor deify them, but *judge righteous judgment.*

Well was Publius, the chief of the island, with the other inhabitants of it, rewarded for their kindness to these distressed strangers, by the *cures* wrought on *the diseased* in their respective families ; and naturally did their kindness and liberality to them increase, with such experience of the miraculous power which wrought by Paul. We cannot but conclude, that this holy apostle whose heart was always so warm with zeal for Christ, especially when it was quickened with such a deliverance, would take this happy opportunity of diffusing *the savour of his name* here. He would tell them, no doubt, who it was that healed them, and testify to them of that greater salvation and more important cure, which they were to seek from him ; nor can we imagine that his labour *was* entirely *in vain in the Lord*. Happy wreck ? on the ruins of which the temple of the Lord was raised, and by occasion of which *Barbarians* were transformed into *Christians* ! Who can say, how many distempered minds were healed ? how many sons and daughters were born to God and to glory, in these *three months* which Paul and Luke spent here ? For modest as that *beloved physician* of souls, as well as of bodies, is in every thing relating to himself, we cannot imagine that he was inactive or unsuccessful in this pious labour. And how naturally did all this tend to raise the regard of the ship's company for these *servants of the most high God*, to whom, as instruments in the hand of his good providence, they first *owed their lives*, and now their accommodations ; to whom also, we hope, some of them *owed even their own souls* !

It is extremely probable, that the indulgence shewed to Paul in *Rome*, the remains of *liberty* which he enjoyed *while in bonds there*, and the much more valued opportunities of usefulness which that liberty gave him, were, in some degree at least, owing to the experience and report of these extraordinary events. Thus, O Lord, shalt thou lead us into whatever difficulties and dangers thou pleasest, and we will cheerfully wait the happy event which shall at length prove the wisdom and kindness of thy most mysterious conduct.—In the mean time, even while travelling *in the bonds of affliction*, may we see

thine hand in all the countenance which we meet with from our *christian brethren* : and cheered with their converse and their friendly offices, may we, like Paul, *thank God, and take courage*, in an humble assurance that thou wilt stand by us in every future unknown extremity ; and wilt either manifest thy power and goodness in raising up human supports, or display thine all-sufficiency in a yet more glorious manner, by bearing us up when they all fail us !

SECTION LX.

Paul's solemn audience of the Jews at Rome, most of whom reject the gospel, but he continues to preach it during two years of his confinement. Ch. xxviii. 17, &c.

- 17 **A**ND it came to pass that after *being* three days at Rome, Paul called together those that were the chief of the Jews *who sojourned there*. And when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have done nothing contrary to the *Jewish* people, or to our paternal customs, yet was I delivered a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans ;
- 18 who having examined me, were willing to have set me at liberty, as
- 19 there was no cause of death found in me. But when the Jews opposed it, I was obliged to appeal to Cæsar ; And this I have done
- 20 not as having any thing of which to accuse my own nation. For this reason, therefore, I entreated that I might see and speak with you : for it is on account of that which is the hope of Israel, that
- 21 I am bound with this chain.—And they said to him, We have neither received letters from Judea concerning thee ; nor hath one of the brethren that hath come hither, related or said any evil concerning thee. But we desire to hear from thee what thou thinkest ; for as concerning this sect of the *Nazarenes* it is known to us that
- 22 it is every where spoken against.—And having appointed him a day, many of them came to him at his lodging ; to whom he expounded many passages of their own scriptures, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them of the things that related to Jesus, both from the law of Moses and the prophets, from morning
- 23 till evening. And some were persuaded by the things which were
- 24 spoken ; and some believed them not. And so disagreeing with each other, they brake up the assembly : Paul only saying this one word in the close, Surely well did the Holy Spirit speak by Isaiah
- 25 the prophet to our fathers, when he saith, Go to this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand ; and seeing
- 26 ye shall see, and shall not perceive : for the heart of this people is become gross ; and with their ears they hear heavily ; and they have drawn their eyes together ; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart,
- 27 and should be converted, and I should heal them. Therefore

- be it known unto you, that the salvation of God *which you desire*, is sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear and embrace it.—
 29 And when he had said these things, the Jews departed, having great debates among themselves, *on what they had heard from him*.
 30 But Paul continued two whole years in his own hired house, and
 31 received all that came to him; preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which relate to the Lord Jesus Christ, with all freedom of speech, and without any restraint *from the Roman magistrates**.

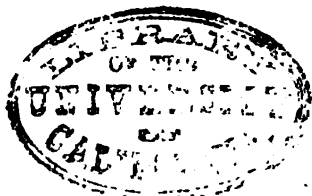
REFLECTIONS.

Let us with pleasure observe that uniform tenor of christian zeal and compassionate regard to the salvation of men, which prevailed in the mind of Paul, and reigned in it even to the very period of this history, yea to that of his life. No sooner was he arrived at *Rome*, but an *earnest desire* of communicating the blessings of the gospel to his *kinsmen according to the flesh*, engaged him to send for the *Jews*, and to confer with them concerning *the kingdom of God*; generously forgetting his own wrongs, and waving those complaints he might justly have made against his accusers and persecutors. He found them here, as well as in *Judea*, under prejudices which he could not conquer, with all his strength of reason and eloquence. They called the christian religion a *sect*, and maintained that it was *every where spoken against*. But if this were indeed the case, how far was it from being any reason against embracing and obeying the gospel! since all the men upon earth might attempt in vain to make falsehood truth, and truth falsehood, in any single instance; and might as well pull the sun from the firmament, as, by all their malice and rage, dethrone that blessed Redeemer whom God hath established, by a decree firmer than the ordinances of heaven.

No scripture of the *Old Testament* is more frequently referred to in the *New* than the words of *Isaiah*, which contain so just a description of what the Jewish nation was in the days of that prophet, and in those of Christ and his apostles. How deplorable a case! to be spiritually *blind* and *deaf* under the brightest light of the gospel, and its loudest proclamations! To *harden the heart* against the most gracious offers of healing and life, and to arm themselves against their own salvation with weapons of eternal death! Justly were they at last given over by God, and *sealed up* under incurable obstinacy. May divine pity and help be extended to those who are marching on by large steps towards the same character, and as it seems to the same end! Adored be divine grace, that any are inclined to hear, and to obey. To them the ministers of Christ may turn with pleasure, and find, in their believing regards to the gospel, a sufficient recompence

* In consequence of this many converts were made; and this confinement which seemed to have so discouraging an aspect, was on the whole a means of promoting the gospel: Many of his retired hours were also employed in corresponding with the christian churches, and writing several of those excellent epistles which were to be so great a blessing to the most distant ages.

for all the labours and hazards they encounter in a faithful concern for its propagation.—To conclude all ; Let us adore the gracious conduct of providence, which secretly interposed to moderate the apostle's confinement, and thereby gave him an opportunity of performing various and extensive services to the church, of which he must otherwise have been incapable. *The wrath of man praises God ; and the remainder of it he restrains.* He hath allotted to each of his servants, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, a due proportion both of labours and sufferings ; and neither earth nor hell shall be able so to break his schemes, as to obstruct the one, or increase the other. The sacred history, which is now closing upon us, affords many illustrations of this remark. Let us be thankful for it ; and while we peruse it, let us indulge those reflections which may naturally arise from it, to establish our faith in the gospel, and to quicken our obedience to it. Amen !



END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LOAN PERIOD 1 HOME USE	2	3
4	5	6

Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days prior to due date

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